

# MY VAGABONDAGE

## BY THE SAME AUTHOR

### NOVELS

THE PROCESSION OF LIFE  
JOHN CHARITY  
THE SHADOWY THIRD  
THE PINCH OF PROSPERITY  
BROTHERS  
THE HILL  
THE FACE OF CLAY  
HER SON  
THE WATERS OF JORDAN  
THE PALADIN  
THE OTHER SIDE  
JOHN VERNEY  
BLINDS DOWN  
SPRAGGE'S CANYON  
QUINNEYS'  
THE TRIUMPH OF TIM  
THE SOUL OF SUSAN YELLAM  
FISHPINGLE  
WHITEWASH  
THE FOURTH DIMENSION  
CHANGE PARTNERS  
THE YARD  
A WOMAN IN EXILE  
BLINKERS  
WAITINGS FOR WORTH  
MISS TORROBIN'S EXPERIMENT  
THE ACTOR  
MR. ALLEN (with Archibald Marshall)  
VIRGIN  
OUT OF GREAT TRIBULATION  
INTO THE LAND OF NOD  
THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT  
VICARS' WALK  
THE DISAPPEARANCE OF MARTHA  
PENNY  
THE OLD GUARD SURRENDERS  
MOONRILLS  
WHEN SORROWS COME

### SHORT STORIES

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LOOT  
SOME HAPPENINGS  
LEAVES FROM ARCADY  
QUINNEYS' ADVENTURES  
DEW OF THE SEA  
THE ENCHANTED GARDEN  
EXPERIENCES OF A BOND STREET  
JEWELLER

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SLOPE  
FELLOW TRAVELLERS  
THE BEST OF ENGLAND  
THIS WAS ENGLAND  
ARISING OUT OF THAT

### PLAYS

HER SON  
JELF'S  
SEARCHLIGHTS  
QUINNEYS'  
CASE OF LADY CAMBER  
WHO IS HE?  
FISHPINGLE  
THE HOUSE OF PERIL  
HUMPTY DUMPTY  
COUNT X  
BLINKERS  
MRS. POMEROY'S REPUTATION  
JUBILEE DRAX (with W. Hackett)  
PLUS FOURS (with H. Simpson)



# MY VAGABONDAGE

A POT-POURRI AND CAUSERIE

*Being another pilgrimage down the corridors of the past,  
with a flight now and again into the future, taking the luck  
of the road as it comes: in brief, a wayfarer's chronicle.*

By  
HORACE ANNESLEY VACHELL

*"Come, wander with me . . .  
On river and forest, o'er mountain and lea."*

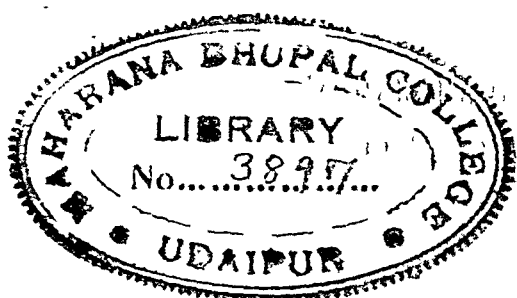


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TO  
ELSIE A. RUSS  
WHO, INDEFATIGABLY, HAS  
SPEEDED ME ON MY WAY,  
I DEDICATE THIS  
BOOK.



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runaway bronco heading for a cliff As he passed me, I yelled out "Where you going, Quong?" He replied calmly "I no sabe"

Perhaps the essence of vagabondage was on the lips of that son of Confucius I don't know where I'm going, and that gives spice to the adventure. The happy hiker seldom carries a map in his pocket, Wandering Willie breezes along without any objective other than "hand-outs" and the luck of the road

The luck of the road!

An excellent title for a novelist. I have often wondered what part a title plays in the sale of a book. A publisher rejected (so he told me) *Jemima Empties the Slops* But the author may have had his tongue in his cheek. A Bath bookseller is of opinion that any word difficult to pronounce should be deleted from a title, because shy customers are terrified of mispronouncing it. That had not occurred to me

I return to the luck of the road, not the king's highway, I prefer lanes and bypaths Even a cul-de-sac has its charm, with a notice above a padlocked gate warning trespassers that they will be prosecuted if they pass through it. Are they ever prosecuted? I was confronted, when climbing such a gate within recent years, by a burly gentleman who wanted to know what the devil I was doing I told him that at my age I wanted to assure myself that I could climb gates Whereupon he said more graciously "Now that you are here, come and look at my Herefords" Half an hour later we were in his panelled parlour with a tankard at our elbows He grinned when I toasted 'The Luck of the Road'

Perhaps, of all excursions, the happiest are those of

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fancy, when, snug in an easy chair, we are transported to places we have never seen except with the mind's eye. The Vale of Kashmir is one. Thomas Moore never saw the garden of roses by Bendemeer's stream. After he had written the lilting verses, did he want to see it? Was he afraid that he might be disappointed? I feel the same about Saint-Anthony-in-Roseland. The name suffices. An old friend of mine, the dearest of all my fellow travellers, found himself near Jerusalem. At the last moment courage failed him. He sent his man-servant as his proxy! I sympathize with him. When I lived in California I resisted the temptation to visit the Falls of Yo-Semite. I had heard too much about them. If a fairy godmother offered to show me Aphrodite rising from the sea, I think I should decline the invitation, sure in my own mind that I might imperil my youthful conception of the goddess, inspired by an illustration in Hort's *Pantheon*.

## 2

I intended to call this book *The Luck of the Road*, but the title has been used by a novelist. There ought to be copyright in titles. I recall a novel, by Ethel Boileau, entitled *The Arches of the Years*. Soon afterwards another book, not a novel, appeared with the same title. Both novel and book passed through several impressions and were widely read. Surely any publisher who preens himself on knowing his business ought to satisfy himself before publication that a title has not been previously used. The Incorporated Society of Authors might give attention to this not unimportant matter.

## 3

So far as the luck of the road is concerned, a traveller ought to back his luck. My father took a scratch pack of hounds to the Ardennes in Belgium. What did he hunt? Wolves, boars, foxes, and hares. He was out for the luck of the chase. Some of his ardour may be inborn in me, and find expression whenever I replenish my fountain pen.

## 3

I shall begin my vagabondage in Bath. I have now, after eight years' residence, more than a nodding acquaintance with the Queen City. Apart from its historical associations with which the general reader is familiar, apart from its virtues as a spa, the amenities of Bath as a place of residence are outstanding. Where else in the kingdom can you find so many admirably built houses at such low prices or rentals? Where, out of London, can you find more delectable shops or more varied entertainment? Rates and taxes are low, gas is cheaper than anywhere else in the kingdom, and I am not alluding to the correspondence column in the *Bath and Wilts Chronicle and Herald*. The hunting facilities are second only to the famous "shires." We are close to Severn's Silver Sea, and within easy distance of four lovely, unspoiled counties. We have three golf courses and an admirable train service. I am not writing an advertisement of Bath, but expressing my surprise that our amenities are not better known to those in search of a home.

Every visitor looks at the Roman Baths. How many are aware that what we see to-day remained hidden for twelve

hundred years? During this long time the daily volume of half a million gallons of water has been constant; and their temperature has never varied by the fraction of a degree. The remains of the Roman Baths were discovered in 1755 and recovered. In 1883, the corporation uncovered them! If further costly excavations were possible (involving the demolition of many houses), it is certain that other baths would be found, because experts agree that they extend to the Abbey and under it. They occupied in Roman days a space of some seven acres.

One may well pause to reflect upon the significance of this in an age too concerned with the passing moment. The past insists on cropping up and out.

It is a thousand pities that the Abbey does not stand in a noble Green similar to that of Wells, but the same could be said of St. Paul's Cathedral. Public enterprise can do little; private munificence might do much. The charm of Bath keeps me on tenterhooks of expectation. Years ago it was a city of slippered ease with a faint odour of decay about it, a Mecca for elderly people who lived to a great age. One lady, a sometime queen of Bathonian society, gave a party to celebrate her eighty-first birthday. She received her guests standing erect and smiling. In answer to many congratulations, she murmured: "Yes, yes, as an old woman I deem myself fortunate in my friends and my good health." A deep voice was heard: "Old, child, *old*? What are you talking about? I'm old enough to be your mother." This was true. The speaker was Miss Raby, who lived to be a hundred and six! She was more than twenty years the senior of her hostess.

Our soft equable climate, our record for an amount of annual sunshine equal to any resort of the South Coast, may

account for this longevity, but I wish to stress the point that Bath, within the last decade, has roused herself from a long tranquil sleep succeeding the frenzied social activities of the past. We had, the other day, a Jane Austen night at the Pump Room. One lady, who impersonated Jane in a clever little sketch written by a Bathonian, was living in the house where Jane lived and was borne triumphantly from it to the Pump Room in a sedan chair!

Miss Austen is a link between Bath as it is to-day and Bath as it was when Fielding wrote *Tom Jones*. During her lifetime she was only read by the few. The Wizard of the North bracketed her with Susan Ferrier and Maria Edgeworth—"They have," he wrote, "given portraits of real society far superior to anything vain man has produced of like nature." I recall Miss Ferrier's *Marriage*, and it amused me recently to collate *Pride and Prejudice* with Miss Edgeworth's *Belinda*. It is surprising that Sir Walter ranked these three ladies as equal. Jane's sly, subtle humour has made her immortal. Strange that a parson's daughter, subject—as she must have been—to the pettifogging conventions and traditions of squires, squireens and their ladies, should have seen so clearly and portrayed so incomparably what struck her as absurd. She ought to have been a contemporary of the accomplished lady who writes under the ingenious pseudonym of E. M. Delafield.

Jane is dear to all good Bathonians. If she were still with us, she might resent being uplifted as the idol of a cult. I believe that she would have abhorred cults and poked fun at them. There is no vagabondage about a cult. You become a parasite when you twine yourself round one tree, even if it be a *sequoia gigantea*! When I was President of the Dickens Fellowship an ardent Dickensian declared that

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he only read two authors: Charles Dickens and Bernard Shaw. I told him that a Neo-Georgian would not be too pleased to be linked up with a Victorian, and that Dickens, with his immense sympathy for all sorts and conditions of men, would urge him to enlarge his literary acquaintance.

Chesterton wrote of Bath that young people couldn't live in it and that old people couldn't die in it! This is not true in 1935. Youth has given Bath a fillip. Youth hankers after an aerodrome! Youth may get it. Can Youth pay for it?

This afternoon I went, in drenching rain, to our Pavilion, a building unworthy of the town which Wood built, but of vast seating capacity. Cortot enchanted us for two hours interpreting Schumann and Chopin. His playing of ten of the most difficult *Etudes* was superlative. At one moment he seemed to strike chords in the bass with a Titan's strength; a second later Titania might have lent him her fingers. He bestowed upon a wildly enthusiastic audience all that he could give with lavish generosity except a—smile! Perhaps he was tired, although he looked fifteen years younger than his age. As I listened to one of Schumann's *Kinderscenen*, *The Poet Speaks*, I wondered if vagabondage all over the music-loving world had wearied the player? Probably not. I have been privileged to meet many celebrities who have been, particularly the singers, birds of passage. With rarest exceptions (Gerald du Maurier was one), they have admitted that the thrill of seeking new worlds to conquer was an *elixir vitae*! Not one—so far as I can remember—mentioned the satisfaction of making money, not at the expense of others. The money paid to a supreme artist is paid over so gladly. Would



that we could pay our weekly bills in the same joyous spirit!

I have known so many artists writers, painters, musicians, actors and cooks. Perhaps I ought to include two milliners, whose names every woman knows. Are there class distinctions in Art? Those who make a cult of ugliness are not artists. The artist adores beauty. If he bends his knee to ugliness, he is prostituting his soul! But Art exacts undivided attention. Ought artists to marry? Is it playing the game of life to offer any woman, or man, less than half oneself? The artist has to live in two worlds. We know which world is dearer, and, as time flits by, he is likely to turn his art into an obsession, faithful only to that. By this morning's post came a presentation copy of *The Poetical Works of Dowson*, edited by Desmond Flower. I saw much of Dowson when I met him in Brittany in the naughty 'nineties, when he was looking and feeling miserable, an absinthe addict! He wrote

With pale indifferent eyes we sit and wait  
For the dropt curtain and the closing gate.

He is now acclaimed as a lyrical poet of high if not quite the highest rank, lucid, tuneful, and exquisitely fastidious, with a Gallic flair for the right word. It was the pallor and indifference of Dowson that affected me when we talked together at Pontaven. Despite his ill health he grudged no time and labour expended on his work. Nothing else "mattered." For instance, he regarded soap and water as negligible. Gertrude Atherton and I agreed that he was indeed a *fleur du mal*, at his best when he talked about Baudelaire and Verlaine.

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I make no apology for this digression, because I have an axe to grind. I can use poor Ernest Dowson as a peg whereon to hang my conviction that an artist is wretchedly unhappy without some measure of success. If he works indefatigably with authentic love for work's sake, he must, if he is human, expect and demand recognition. Without it he withers away.

## 4

I have been lent *The New Bath Guide*, published first in 1766, anonymously, by Christopher Anstey, written in sprightly verse. Here is a sample: it sets forth the recuperative powers of the widow of one Stephen Quicklackit:

'Tis the widow Quicklackit, whose husband last week,  
Poor Stephen, went suddenly forth in a pique,  
And push'd off his boat for the Stygian creek.  
Poor Stephen! He never returned from the bourn,  
But left his disconsolate widow to mourn;  
Three times did she faint when she heard of the news;  
Six days did she weep, and all comfort refuse;  
But Stephen, no sorrow, no tears can recall;  
So she hallows the seventh, and comes to the ball.

This thin volume is a saraband, *à clef*, but I have not the key to it. Small wonder that it was published anonymously. It was a best-seller in Bath (my copy is a thirteenth edition), but my reason for mentioning it is other than that. The smart society of Anstey's day is convincingly presented with, of course, diverting caricature. All these half-wits, male and female, peacocked about our parades. What a crew! I have little stomach for their company, but they

serve to make flesh and blood of Jane Austen's characters as you find them in *Persuasion*. At the end of the booklet, the author expresses a pious wish that fat ganders may feed on their graves.

The innumerable books—good, bad and indifferent—which have been written about Bath should be collated by some brilliant humorist, preferably a young man with a sense of historical perspective. He would be no longer young when he had finished his task! He could find inexhaustible material in our Public Library. *The Book of Bath* has yet to be written.

As a trustee of the Bath Preservation Trust, I have no sentimental wish to preserve anything merely because it is old, but I hope that the alleys between streets and by-streets will be spared. No writer, so far as I know, has laid stress upon their peculiar charm. They are so narrow that Romeo on one side could make love to Juliet on the other if they sat at their bedroom windows. The mansions of gentility, in every famous street in Bath, tell their oft told tale. Mural tablets inform the visitor that here dwelt, for a season or two, Nelson, Landor, Lord Chesterfield, Quin, Sarah Siddons and a hundred other celebrities. A Bathonian, the other day, rolled in the dust an elderly gentleman who affirmed that there had been in the past only one Sarah. "Are you alluding," asked the Bathonian, "to the honoured wife of Abraham?" The elderly gentleman snorted. "I am alluding, my good man, to Sarah Bernhardt." The Bathonian smiled blandly. "Her name was Rosine. Have you ever heard of Sarah Siddons?"

He might have added that another famous Sally, Sally Lun, lived in Lilliput Alley. Of the romance of our alleys we know nothing. But I can see beaux and belles still

flitting down them under cover of the friendly darkness out of sight of chairmen and watchmen. Covert walks describe them admirably.

We are, at the moment, gloating over a new possession: a remarkable collection of playbills, costumes, and almost everything connected with the theatre, presented to us by an ardent collector. This munificent gift has inspired others to add to these treasures. Indeed, where to house them is a problem to be solved. We are rich in reliques of Henry Irving and Ellen Terry. What links with the past are these old playbills. I found myself staring at the name of Charles Mathews. As a boy I saw him play in *My Awful Dad* and *Cool as a Cucumber*. On the stage he looked a man of thirty, although he was then long past the psalmist's span, born in 1803. Fanny Squeers, had she seen him, might have exclaimed, as she did when Nicholas Nickleby made a soft nib for her: "I never saw such legs in the whole course of my life." They were even more shapely than Nellie Farren's.

This exhibition may attract world-wide attention. On the other hand, it is a lamentable fact that the present is so engrossing that we pay scant attention to what is past, loyal though we are to those who have entertained us. The magnificent cardinal's red robe worn by Irving when he played Becket brought to mind an incident told to me by Mrs. Comyns Carr. She had provided for Ellen Terry a sumptuous cloak, also of gleaming red. Ellen wore it only once—at the dress rehearsal. "Take that," said Irving, "to my dressing-room." He wore it throughout the run of the play. His sardonic humour made young men rather afraid of him. An American actor, who could impersonate his mannerisms and imitate his voice, had the impudence, when

the great man was looking on, to ask "How's that?" Irving replied (to the delight of the big audience) "M'm—one of us, my lad, is rotten!"

Our Public Library is another magnificent collection, especially rich in *Napoleoniana*, including a series of newspapers and periodicals published by every country in Europe at that period. The removal of our treasures from quarters too cramped to display them has raised a tempest in our tea-cup, not without mirth provoking repercussions. Those who love to magnify a petty grievance declare that the Assembly Rooms, hard by the famous Circus, are not so central as the Guildhall. Civically they are not, but topographically they are, as a child can perceive by glancing at any map of the city. It is also true that the trams and motor-omnibuses disembark passengers within a stone's throw of the Library, not at the doors of the Assembly Rooms. But it is ridiculous to speak of the Assembly Rooms as inaccessible. Those who have crowded to them to see the Cinema found it no hardship to walk from the trams to a picture palace. Bathonians who love books realize what an ever growing attraction a great Public Library is to visitors as well as residents, and the tremendous advantage of being able to display the treasures, instead of locking them up in cupboards.

We are rich in the Frederick Huth collection of early printed books, not the Huth who collected the Elizabethan dramatists, but a relative of his who lived in Lansdown Crescent. We have a work of Albert Magnus, and rare works of Peter of Blois, sometime archdeacon of Bath. We have a *Guardia Ars Dipthongendi* with illuminated initial letters, and Appian's History of Rome, one of the loveliest of printed books, printed by Ratdolt of Venice, in the

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fifteenth century. A copy of Machiavelli's *The Prince* is bound in human skin. A lady tells me—how did she get this tidbit of information?—that only the back of the victim is used for such backing! I returned a Roland for this Oliver. In 1882, I made the acquaintance of a dour Scot, a sheep-herder. He used a razor strop made out of several strips of human skin from the backs of Redskins, skins, so he told me, tanned by himself. My boyish horror was mitigated when he went on to add that two Apaches in Arizona had murdered his mother, his wife and his children! Certainly the grimmest souvenir of a dreadful tragedy which I have ever held in my hand.

I make no apology for setting down two excerpts from the flyleaf of a book published locally:

George Morris is my Name  
and England is my Nation Bath  
it is my Dwelling please (*sic*) and christ  
my salvation.

Martha Morris, presumably the gentleman's child, has written below this:

Mary Morris her hand and pen She will  
be good but God knows when.

We have more parks and gardens than any city in the kingdom except London. Nevertheless, they are not frequented except by children and elderly persons. Thousands of Bathonians know so little about Bath! But I have been in country houses where my host and hostess could tell me nothing about their own pictures, porcelain, and family miniatures. A cousin, years ago, instructed her

butler to sell some silver, all of it Early Georgian, because it looked so old and worn! When I protested, she remarked calmly "It was so old that I got hardly any thing for it."

There is a fine collection of old silver in our Holburne of Menstrie Museum, not to mention much else, but I dare not ask the Curator how many visitors have passed through the spacious galleries

## 6

It is still the mode to drink a cup of coffee in Milsom Street, and the curious can see the green berry roasted, ground before it cools, and finally dissolved into what the Creator of all good things designed it to be. Good as this coffee is, it fails to tickle my palate as seductively as the beverage brewed by the old *Inditas* of Guatemala. This is their procedure. They take a frying pan never used for other and baser service, such as frying flesh or fish, they warm it over the glowing, smokeless embers of a wood fire, they place in it a small pat of fresh butter, and, when this is sizzling, the green berries are added. Later on, at the right moment, a bean of vanilla is introduced. The frying pan is gently shaken with a rotatory motion, so as to assure the perfect browning of every berry. Not a berry in the pan is under or over roasted! These berries are then ground in a mortar-and pestle, and the *Indita* is lavish with quantity. To make a pot of coffee for two persons, she uses twice as many berries as we do. Then she puts the ground coffee into an earthenware pot with fresh water, the softer the better, and before the pot boils dashes into it a little cold

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water, repeating this process three times. The cold water sends dregs to the bottom of the pot. The coffee, when served, is the colour of old brown sherry, clear and fragrant. Our ladies of the larder would grudge—and who am I to blame them?—the time and trouble expended, and regretfully I must set down that they lack the skill in perfect roasting which comes with long practice. Still, this recipe can be essayed by any housewife who likes, in an apostolic spirit, to slip out of the culinary ruts.

Fifty years ago, when I was in the West Indies, I saw coffee made *à l'Espagnole*. In Cuba, the berries were roasted and not allowed to cool off. They were not too finely ground. After this the procedure varied. They were placed in a stout canvas bag. Water freshly on the boil was added. The first drops filtering through the bag were poured into tiny cups and offered to the men, the *caballeros*! More water was added, and the second infusion, less potent but more aromatic, was served to the *señoras* and *señoritas*.

I wonder when the expression “coffee-housing” came into general use? It is to-day a synonym in the hunting-field (and elsewhere) for small talk. I cannot remember whether or not it was used when I was entered to fox as a boy.

Mr. Theobald, of Theobald's Coffee Shop, told me that people who are habitual coffee drinkers know very little about it. He lent me three books, and from these I have taken what may interest some of my readers. The first coffee-house in Europe was established in Constantinople in 1551: the first coffee-house in England was opened by an enterprising son of Israel, named Jacobs, at Oxford, in 1650. By 1732 coffee planting and culture had become general in



the British and French colonies In 1616 the plant was brought from Mocha, in Arabia, to Holland, so we know why the Dutch consume more coffee, per head, than other nations It is declared that coffee drinkers are not liable to gout! In a little book published quite recently, the author affirms that the art of producing a really good cup of coffee "is not yet very well known," which bears out what I have just written Excessive boiling ruins the beverage, so does over roasting The labour saving housewife, who buys ground coffee, may be turned from the evil of her ways, when I cite Dr Lankester's list of coffee substitutes Iris seeds, Broom seeds, chick peas, acorns, carrot and parsnip root, beans, etc , etc Beware, my lady of the larder, of coffee essences!

Although it is true that strong coffee assuages hunger, the drinking of one cup at Mr Theobald's (at the modest price of fourpence) did not diminish my appetite for luncheon an hour afterwards, on the contrary, it served as an agreeable apéritif Mr Theobald reminded me that the coffee plant, like the orange tree, bears simultaneously fruit and blossom, a scarlet fruit and a milk white blossom

## 7

This brief digression upon coffee-making raises an interesting question Why do we English praise French coffee? In France, outside of the famous hotels and restaurants, it is inexpressibly bad, much better in Germany and the United States. Here in England, after dinner coffee is often bitter, which damns it, but it is more fragrant and palatable than it used to be Nevertheless, we hug to our

## PREPRANDIAL

insular bosoms the preconceived idea that French coffee is superlatively good.

The profit on one cup of after-dinner coffee at a smart restaurant is preposterous. Often we pay a shilling for what costs a penny! We demand an "extra special" (almost certainly out of the shilling pot) and fork out cheerfully eighteen-pence! When I complained of this extortion to the head of a famous catering firm, asking also why he charged for a bottle of table claret more than twice what he paid for it, he replied with a disarming smile: "Think of our overhead charges!" This phrase, so pat to every profiteering lip, is becoming shop-soiled. It can be countered with the slogan: "Small profits and a quick turn-over." Innkeepers, throughout the kingdom, must be reading, with acute appreciation of De la Rochefoucauld's maxim that the misfortunes of others are not altogether displeasing to us, certain statistics recently published, but not brought saliently to the public eye, setting forth the immense shrinkage in the numbers of visitors to France and Germany, who now come to us. Does it occur to our Bonifaces that this is a great opportunity for them? If they cut their prices, if they take more interest in creating demand by furnishing the right supplies and the right welcome, we shall see these visitors again, and they will tell their stay-at-home friends to tread in their footsteps. The English innkeeper seldom smiles upon his guest till the bill is paid; the more sprightly son of Gaul smiles upon his guest as soon as he claps eyes on him, and keeps on smiling till the hour of that guest's departure, when he murmurs: "To the re-seeing, dear sir."

I see no reason why this kingdom should not become the world's playground. We can offer more than any other

## MY VAGABONDAGE

country cheap transport, unrivalled facilities for all field-sports and games, splendid roads, access to stately houses and enchanting gardens, lovely villages, everything, in brief, which appeals to mind and eye, but not everything which appeals to the palate. I still feel, when I cross the threshold of an inn or hotel unknown to me, that I am stepping gingerly into a danger zone.

## CHAPTER II

### CHANGES AND CHANCES

*Miss 1935—A Shocking Surprise—California—The Yellow Book—Snowdrops—Marlborough—Cromwell—Macaulay—Clarissa—Some Unpublished Letters—The Romance of Big Business—A Regrettable Incident.*

#### I

"TELL me," said a charming young lady yesterday, "what has been the most startling change in your time?"

I might have replied: "You." The change from Miss 1885 to Miss 1935 would be startling had it not been for the intervening years, the metamorphosis establishing itself slowly and inevitably. It may have begun when Aristophanes wrote his *Lysistrata*. Burning Sappho, as likely as not, held a match to the feminine inhibitions and obediences of her day; so did Joan of Arc! Throughout the ages what we call the Woman's Movement has ebbed and flowed like the tides. It is now at its flood; it may ebb again sooner than we think.

All the big changes in the last fifty years, changes which a child could tick off on his fingers, have come about gradually, except the earthquakes.

This morning I found myself chuckling as I shaved, because I recalled a story—possibly apocryphal—which illustrates comically, if not quite convincingly, a change

so dramatically startling that those who witnessed it, or are said to have witnessed it, nearly swooned with horror and surprise. I shall not accuse myself of high treason in telling it, because it happened more than forty years ago. If it has been told in print before, I am not aware of it. Certain ladies and gentlemen were standing at the foot of a grand staircase in attendance upon a high and mighty Personage, who, throughout a long life, had inspired awe, respect, and devotion in millions. She appeared at the head of the staircase, dressed as usual in sable, wearing a mushroom hat and a veil. The ladies and gentlemen stood rigidly at attention. To the horror of all present, the august Personage, instead of descending majestically the stairs, threw a rumble leg over the banisters, sped swiftly down the broad rail, and landed in a crumpled heap among the palsied onlookers! To the intense relief of her faithful servants, out of the heap of black clothes peered a roguish little face. A grandchild of the Personage, impersonating the Grandmother, had "spoofed" everybody. The Grandmother, so I was solemnly assured, never heard of this prank, but the lightning change from dignity to impudence may well be described as—startling.

I cannot recall any change so shocking and disintegrating as this, but I shall not shirk yesterday's question. Wireless, moving pictures, television, telepathy—all the wonders of our time—found us more or less prepared for them. Indeed, if to-morrow communication were established with the Martians, we should not be overwhelmed with surprise, although they might be when they learned what a muddle we have made of our planet. Again, I am not easily shocked, but I should be if some imp pulled aside a chair as I was about to sit on it. However, I was shocked when I read

*Lady Chatterley's Lover.* Not, I hasten to add, at its obscenity, but because the author was a writer of such importance and standing. I felt that he had debased the currency of the English language, fouled his own nest. It was startling to me that there should be a public, no matter how limited, ready to gorge out of such a pig-tub. I mention this novel to soap the ways to answer yesterday's question. I left California in 1898; I had witnessed (and taken part in) great changes on the Pacific Slope: the swift transition from the idle, leisurely life of the ranchos to the bustling, get-rich-quick activities which succeeded the sale and subdivision of these huge tracts of land. I had known personally the pioneers who engineered these changes: Colis P. Huntington, Stanford, Charles Crocker, Flood, and a score of others. Nevertheless, despite such changes in the face of the country, the people had not changed. Bret Harte had written much about roaring camps, and my friends in England, when I visited my native land, believed that California was bristling with desperadoes, train-robbers, tin-horn gamblers and—Apaches. A lady wanted to know if wigwams were as venomous as rattlesnakes! Well, well, I saw something of rough life in a rough cow-county, but every Californian of my generation will testify that the native sons and daughters of the Golden West, as a traveller might find them between Mount Shasta and San Diego, were puritanical in their outlook on life and conduct; church-members, respectable in their ways, impassioned lovers of order because they had suffered from disorder. All women, young and old, enthroned by the men on pedestals, fought tooth and talon against loose living and loose thinking. Being an Englishman, I thought to myself—careful not to say so in public—that such sobriety, with

If the glorious orb of day smiles on me, I shall wander soon to Taunton, egged on to do so after reading Winston Churchill's vivid account of the Bloody Assize in his *Life and Times of Marlborough*. The book has enthralled me, a masterpiece of biography written by a master of our language. The Second in Command at our Public Library tells me that biographies, such as this and John Buchan's *Cromwell*, are displacing in popular favour the ordinary novel. Apart from the "thrillers," which have their own public, the novels of the day are not very absorbing. I read so few that my opinion is worthless, but my kind informant at the Library is positive that brilliant biographies, books of travel, and books dealing with our industrial life are in ever increasing demand. Possibly the talks on the wireless have whetted appetite for facts stranger than fiction. The sales of Mr H. V. Morton's books are significant. If you talk with any verger in our cathedrals he will tell you that the ordinary tripper is no longer satisfied with staring agape at miracles wrought in stone, he is becoming interested in their message, he is asking, not as yet too articulately, what that message is. It is significant too that the young verger is able to answer questions put to him.

Will our essayists come into their own again? Will the art of miniature painting as practised by Cooper, Engleheart, Smart and Cosway bloom anew?

Marlborough's *Life* by Lord Wolseley I read in the 'nineties. I have been glancing at it, reading bits here and there. Our field marshal dedicated the two big volumes to his mother, "who taught me to read." With the best will

in the world this lady could not teach her son how to write like Winston Churchill. Any comparison of these two biographies must take that into account. Wolseley, however, accuses Macaulay of vilification of our greatest soldier, and makes no quakerish boggle over the "infamous wages of sin" paid by a monarch's mistress to a handsome and almost penniless lover. What both biographers had to say about this gift from Venus to Mars sent me, hot-foot, to Macaulay and thence, inevitably, to Lecky. I was enthralled by the fascination of Macaulay's style. Churchill might have penned many of the most brilliant passages. Lecky is dry as manzanilla and may well be sipped before sitting down to the rich banquet spread by Macaulay. Lecky does full justice to Marlborough's character, citing Adam Smith: "It is a characteristic almost peculiar to the great Duke of Marlborough, that ten years of such uninterrupted and such splendid successes as scarce any other general could boast of, never betrayed him into a single rash action, scarcely into a single rash word or expression." Praise from Sir Hubert Stanley! As a young man I scoffed (with the acrimonious Greville), at the thought of a guest at Lord Holland's breakfast-table monopolizing the talk till luncheon time! Nevertheless, Thomas Babington Macaulay could do it—and get away with it. Re-reading some of his *Essays*, his cocksureness is curiously misinformed with sentimentality. He could burst into tears, as Trevelyan testifies in the *Life and Letters*, without due provocation. If he never loved a woman, he may well have wept and damned the sins he had no mind to.

What is the test of any book?

Would that Charles Lamb could answer this! Hazlitt or he might say, with twinkling eyes, that a good book is



a signpost arresting the traveller's attention, speeding him on his way, directing him to other books, some of them, perhaps, too lightly forgotten. It never occurred to me when I began to read Winston Churchill's book that I should be delightfully constrained to spend many hours with Macaulay, Lecky and Wolseley. But so it was, and is wholesome food for reflection. One is apt, however, to be indolent, a temptation to be resisted when at ease in an armchair. When I spoke of this to a clever lady whose comments on the *Passing Show* are both caustic and amusing, she riposted "Yes, yes, you are accounting for the polygamous instincts of men. What they read in a captivating woman's heart provokes them to read more elsewhere."

I assured her that she was more than half right.

This lady, whom I shall call Clarissa, will appear again and again in these pages, so I must present my readers to her. She is a Bathonian who came here some years ago to undergo treatment for a rheumatic affection which Sulis water has mitigated. She calls herself a lounge lizard, because her infirmity of body, so she says, has worn out two sofas! The third on which she lies so resignedly (and cheerfully) was given by a friend. It has sixty four springs, which she speaks of as the fountains of youth. It is, admittedly, a triumph of the upholsterer's art. Clarissa, still on the sunny side of eighty, has the heart of a child and the head of a sage. She is an omnivorous reader, a somewhat captious critic, a keen-eyed observer, and as resilient as her sofa! She wears a cap with bells to it, invisible bells, which tinkle like her laughter. Young people adore her. I shall get a wiggling if I throw too many bouquets at her, but it is a fact that her physical passivities seem to have quickened

her wits with rejuvenating accelerations. I tell her that I shall be in my coffin when she will be back in a bassinette.

It was Clarissa who reminded me that Macaulay's style, a style confirming the French tag, is an authentic presentment of the man. Presently, we wandered into the eighteenth century. Clarissa contended that then as now the man emerged from his writings. Fellows like Justice Bolt were pompous bores. I had shewn her some letters written by my ancestor, George, Lord Lyttelton, the historian, absurdly stilted and formal. She rebuked me when I submitted that all letters of that day were preposterously alike. There are, it seems, notable exceptions. Clarissa suggested that I should set down a letter from the brilliant Bolingbroke to Thomas Coke, good Queen Anne's sprightly chamberlain. If it amuses the reader as much as it amused us, all will be well. It might have been written by any not too mealy-mouthed young spark of to-day. Tom Coke lay at Bath. St. John, then Secretary of State, wrote from Whitehall, under date, May 28th, 1705.

DEAR RAKE,

I am glad to hear your election is over . . . and your worship is again upon the hunt; for what the devil can carry you to Bath at this time but a whore? . . . If you don't call at Bucklebury when you leave the Bath, you and I shall quarrel. . . . I have little news to entertain you with. The Town is very dull, or I am so, for I have not one bawdy story to tell of myself or friend. Really, Tom, you are missed. Lord Marlborough has got to Treves, and I have a letter from him of the 27th, but he will not be able to act by ten days so soon as he expected, the Prussians, Imperialists and Germans not having marched at the time agreed upon. In the meantime the French have invested Huy and frightened the Dutch out of their wits. . . . Dear Tom, divert thyself, continue to love me, and be persuaded no man on earth is more entirely yours than HARRY.

This "dear rake" had several wigs to display on our parades and greens. I translate another letter from his London *perruquier*, a Frenchman!

To be left at Mr Harrison's, the Coffee man's, upon the Walk at the Bath. Sir, in obedience to your orders, I am sending you a wig which I hope will please you. Should you need London wigs, I have some most beautiful hair which comes but rarely into the market, and I take the liberty of writing to you to assure you that if you need more wigs, I shall take the utmost pains to supply the best.

I wander once more down a by path. Is it coincidence that if you are interested in any subject immediately something crops up germane to it? For example, reading Churchill's life of his great ancestor, I naturally enough harked back to the days of Good Queen Anne, but the letter from Bolingbroke fell accidentally into my hands, and it was written to Tom Coke when he was staying at Bath! And the letter from the *perruquier* mentions Harrison, the coffee man. At luncheon to-day, I happened to look up the name of a guest who is lunching here a week hence. It was rather startling to discover that to-day happens to be the anniversary of his birthday! Trifles, light as air, but proof, perhaps, that invisible sprites transmit them to us

In 1704, the year before Harry wrote to his dear Rake, Beau Nash found Bath a vulgar and mismanaged watering-place. In 1731, Nash and the elder Wood had established its fame as the premier spa of the kingdom. The sweet fall

## CHANGES AND CHANCES

of the year was then the fashionable season. This letter from the Earl of Orrery to Lady Kaye speaks for itself:

This place begins to thin (tho' I shall not diminish the number till the beginning of January). It has never been very full of the first rank, and tho' our rooms are so crowded as even to make 'em uneasy to breathe in, the group consists of people that neither know you or are known. Lord Peterborough has been here for a few days, but in his journey hither lost all his shirts, so that his lordship was oblig'd to some of his acquaintance for clean linen during his stay at the Bath. Poor Lord Sussex ended his days here, and what is more extraordinary died a martyr to love, the unfashionable love of his wife. Such a man, in such an age, would be sainted in any other church than ours. A duel has been fought lately between one Jones, a gamester and one Mr. Price (a gentleman's son but of the same profession too), and has put us in great confusion. Price is killed, and Jones has made his escape. In the General there has been no high play, and your ladyship knows that raffles, toyshops and puppet-shows flourish of course. Nash seems dejected and oppressed at heart. I suppose he has not yet recovered his big losses of last year, and the malicious part of us say that his taxes and contributions are much lessened, and that upon his application to his Parliament for a vote of credit the majority was against it. What, Madam, can be more abject than a despised king? But in my mind he seems to labour under the unconquerable distemper of old age, and tho' he attends the balls as usual, his dancing days are over. Lady Bab Mansell bears the belle. . . . Pretty Miss Nanny Stonehouse is a great toast; she is followed by a Knight who seems mightily in love with her, but is afraid to tell her so. . . . Miss Pennyfeather has her followers, and Miss Rodd captivates many powdered beaux. . . . Miss Gardiner is as pretty an idiot as I ever saw. Pardon me, Madam, for calling any of your sex so, but I speak the language of this censorious place. . . .

Something of a gossip, my Lord Orrery.

Nash was impoverished by the act of Parliament which

suppressed gaming, but he regained his supremacy after 1731 and died in 1761.

Noblemen of fashion must have found the Bath of that day much less expensive than London. I culled this bill for a day's expenses from a letter written by Lord Grimston in 1769:

At the Assembly rooms	.	.	0	1	0
Bills in Bath	.	.	.	1	8 0½
Servants at Bath	.	.	.	0	5 4½
Jacob's expenses	.	.	.	0	4 0

Jacob, presumably, was his servant.

## 5

Macaulay's inaccuracies as an historian call to mind the frank confession of Herodotus, the father of *fables*, so he dubs himself. Few writers, however painstaking, are accurate. They repeat the inaccuracies found in county histories and ancient quartos and folios. The size of a book invariably impresses me—and its age. Time seems to hallow what is in it. And Time laughs at itself, chuckling whimsically over human nature. Personally I don't care a tinker's curse about the history to be found in Froissart and Monstrelet, or in Alban Butler's *Lives of the Saints*. They deal, as Chaucer does, with men and women like ourselves. That suffices, that spans the gulf of the centuries. A sage pointed out the other day that good literature flourishes in good times, when bellies are well lined, an affirmation at grips with the highbrow conviction that plain living begets high thinking. One cannot envisage the glorious Elizabethans as vegetarians and total abstainers.

In my next chapter I propose to visit two factories in Bath, to get in touch, if I can, with those who make our world-famed Oliver biscuit, and supply "stays" to the million. I am too old-fashioned to write of them as corsets. Stay-maker is used in the singular, but this prop for the feminine form was made till recently in two pieces: hence the use of the plural; now it is made for the most part in one. After the Great War, when Miss 1919 shingled her pate and shortened her skirts, she "parked her corsets" terrified of being called an "Ironside." How did this parking affect the staymaker? That I must find out. I have pleasantly in mind a pilgrimage to other factories in and near Bristol where chocolate and cigarettes give work to thousands of hands.

The romance of big business began to engage the interest of novelists when I was cow-punching in California. Frank Norris made history with *The Octopus* and *The Pit*; later on Upton Sinclair wrote *The Jungle*. Spinsters and "school-marms" in New England were thrilled to the marrow. How very little was fish to the net of the novelist fifty years ago; into what a stagnant pond he waded! But the change to the study of the oceans of life was insidiously gradual. Victorians loved what they knew and understood, incapable of leaving their ruts. The squires when they entered church breathed a prayer into their silk-hats! Praying into a hat is no longer the mode; talking through it is a change not altogether for the better.

Hitherto industrial England has not allured me. Is it too late to mend my ways and wend them elsewhere? I must be Asquithian about this new interest in big business, likely to be too big for me.

What matters to-day so tremendously is the rehabilitation of the family as the common denominator of our

appalling problem of unemployment. The uncivil war setting class against class can be ended by kindness and sympathy—by nothing else. To me the most significant event of the past year was the Royal Wedding in Westminster Abbey. To all who heard or “listened in” to the address of the Archbishop of Canterbury, his simple words were accepted as the crowning grace and benediction of the joining together of Youth and Beauty. I pity the heart that was not stirred to its depths. Even if another first-class financial crisis awaits us, Youth and Beauty will remain joined together in holy wedlock, they are invincible. The cheering millions in London, the millions not in London who “assisted” at this never-to-be-forgotten function, demonstrated to the rest of the world that the family is still the omnipotent unit of our national life. When it was announced that the wedding of the Duke of Kent and the Princess Marina was regarded by our King as a family affair, every loyal subject in the Empire approved the words as royally right. We saw to it that it was a family affair.

## 6

A regrettable incident, overstraining sympathy and kindness, calls for passing comment. We have our Seven Dials, also known as “Lenin’s Corner,” we have our Bond Street and our Saint James’s Square, and other streets with London nomenclature. We have also—thank God!—our Gay Street. Last year his Worship the Mayor started most happily a subscription list to find work for the unemployed in Bath. This year his successor urged all and sundry to give what they could for the same end. A large sum was

subscribed. Men out of work were offered work at a shilling an hour, with a time-limit of forty hours a week. It is pleasant to record that nearly all the beneficiaries were grateful, eager to avail themselves of an opportunity to show that they preferred work to enforced idleness. Nevertheless a few half-wits have made a grievance of this grant-in-aid, and assembled in Seven Dials to air it. The chairman denounced what has been done to alleviate distress as a swindle; he spoke of a shilling an hour as "slavery wages." Apparently this student of economics thinks that it is better to live on the dole than earn it. The scheme had the approval of the leading Trades Unionists in Bath. It was agreed by all who had the handling of the funds that the wage paid would benefit the greatest possible number. Another gentleman, whose spiritual home is in Russia, and who ought to be deported to that land of milk and honey, over exercised his larynx in condemnation of what he calls the "exploitation" of the workless! The Prospective Parliamentary Labour candidate ground his organ, determined to wreck his own fortunes by talking rubbish.

Bubble and squeak!

The editor of the *Bath and Wilts Chronicle and Herald* said (not in Seven Dials) the last and best word:

"The hand that feeds ought not to be bitten."

Clarissa observed slyly:

"This poison gas, rising from the sewers of Seven Dials, will choke those who use it. Vote-catchers defeat their own ends when they make themselves ridiculous. I shall subscribe to the Relief Fund next year in the hope that once more these tub-thumpers will shout down common sense and common decency."



Old Colonel Smellfungus, not so clear sighted as Clarissa, declares that he, for one, will button up his pocket, and I make no doubt that he will do so fortified by his conscience and his conviction that a guinea saved is a guinea made

Clarissa wants to know if any of these mischief merchants subscribed to our Mayor's Fund? So far as I can learn—not one! Here is a story to brighten the end of the chapter. It throws a sidelight on human nature. The owner of one of the loveliest gardens in Bath saw a woebegone tramp on his doorstep. It happened to be a cold winter's day. The tramp, accosting my friend, tore open his coat, and displayed a naked chest. "Wot blinkin' price this, Mister?" A kindly man was horrified. He hastened to supply a flannel shirt, a woollen waistcoat, some food, and half a crown. So far, so good. Later on in the day, his gardener told him that he had seen the tramp before approaching the house sneak into a disused shed at the bottom of the garden. He made it his business to find out why the man spent some few minutes in it. In the hut he found a vest, a shirt, a collar and tie, and a waistcoat! But the imps of comedy saw to it that he did not apprise his master of this discovery till the tramp had achieved his purpose—and vanished!

The luck of the road was Weary Willie's

## CHAPTER III

### CAKES AND CORSETS

*Two Factories in Bath—Oliver's Biscuits—Oranges at Santa Barbara—Bath Buns—The Virgin Queen's Stays—Broche—Fancy's Cave—Stream-line Corsets—Song of the Shirt—Then and Now—A Woodland Garden.*

#### I

I HAVE been over two factories in Bath: the establishment belonging to Mr. Harold Fortt, and the C.B. Corset Factory. C.B. stands for Charles Bayer, who long ago adventured from Germany with hope in his head, a three-storied head, and (so I understand) not much cash in his pocket—another Dick Whittington! C.B., before he retired from business, was making, nett, about ninety thousand pounds a year.

I went first to the handsome building in Pierrepont Street, not far from the house where James Quin and Lord Chesterfield lived. Here are manufactured the famous Oliver biscuits, not to mention Bath buns, and other confections. Dr. Oliver, born in Cornwall, was a gentleman who left the recipe for the biscuit and a hundred pounds to his servant, Atkins. Let us say: "Thank you, Mr. Atkins!" and have done with it. I had supposed that the recipe was a secret formula. Nothing of the sort. Any

confectioner could make and bake this delicious biscuit if he followed the recipe and refused to allow quality to curtsy to quantity. The demand for Oliver biscuits is not quite on all fours with the demand, shall we say, for Messrs Wills's cigarettes. It is a fermented biscuit made of hops, wheat flour (of the very best), lard and butter. There are, in all, about one hundred operatives, apparently a very happy and healthy family. Bakers who knead dough from morning to night are subject to a form of skin disease, a most unpleasant thought, but here the dough is kneaded by machinery. As I watched this kneading, I caught a whiff of ammonia. Ammonia has uplifting properties, it serves as a leaven.

The biscuits are barely touched by human hands. The dough is rolled out to the right thickness, and looks like a sheet of whity brown paper before it reaches the docketing and stamping machines. Thence it emerges as unbaked biscuits. Nimble fingers snatch from slowly moving trays any biscuit that happens to be imperfect, and the superfluous dough, which returns, automatically, to the kneading tubs. There is no waste. The biscuits vary in size and thickness. The thinnest biscuit takes some four minutes to bake, whereas the thickest remains about ten times as long in the sixty foot oven, albeit never at rest for an instant.

I had a curious experience as I stood at the end of the oven and watched the trays crawling out of it. Mr Fortt said "Eat a biscuit hot from the oven, it is at its best, it will never taste quite so good agam." This kindly advice transported me to Southern California. Fifty years ago, I was staying with Colonel Hollister in Santa Barbara. Before breakfast, my host took me into his orange grove, where each tree displayed both fruit and blossom. There was a

nip of frost, not enough to injure the delicate blossoms, but enough to cool the oranges. "You must suck a few oranges," said the Colonel. "They are at their best; they will never taste quite so good again." He was right. He picked an orange, cut a hole in it with a silver knife, enjoined me to squeeze it, suck it, and throw it away. We had about a dozen oranges apiece, a marvellous whet for a substantial breakfast, and three senses were superlatively satisfied: sight, taste and smell.

I nibbled my Oliver biscuit, allowing it to cool for half a minute. It was indeed at its best.

## 2

The confectionery department delighted me, because here the Man is still omnipotent. My attention was called to the quality of the materials used. Bath buns may be made anywhere, but surely the buns in Pierrepont Street are almost too good to be true. Once again I recalled what had been said to me about marmalade when I was a boy at Harrow. A champion liar, old enough to know better, had assured me that the marmalade of commerce was made from orange peel picked out of the gutter, turnip, and cheap sugar! I was fool enough to believe him. But I was not alone in my folly. Thousands of housewives refused to eat jams and jellies which were not "home-made." Every great establishment had its "still-room." If there is a still-room in any ducal household to-day where the maids can make Bath buns not better but as good as those made here, I should like to wander into it.

The decoration of the little cakes covered with sugar

icing caught and held my eye Girls do this work at incredible speed, popping on to the icing (not yet set), tiny bits of angelica and other crystallized fruits, a feat of legerdemain I had not time to stop and talk to them Here, as at Somerdale and Bedminster, they catch 'em young, after they leave school Do they like their work? They do They like still better their independence when the day's work is done They are subject, of course, to a rigid discipline, which inculcates punctuality, manual dexterity, and personal cleanliness They look healthy and happy . . .

## 3

The C B factory is immense

Here we can study the evolution of the corset At an exhibition of Needlework recently held in Bath I was privileged to stare, unblushingly, at some exquisitely embroidered stays once worn by the Virgin Queen, wondering if Essex or Leicester had ever been vouchsafed a glimpse of them In the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, U.S.A., there is a faded corset, bound with red leather, which belonged once to an aged woman, Mary Ann Pilgrim, who claimed that it had been in the possession of her family for three hundred years Tradition affirmed that Elizabeth gave this relic to a certain Mrs Shackles, who in turn gave it to her maid, Mistress Pilgrim Elizabeth, incidentally, is credited with wearing England's first pair of black silk stockings in 1560 In 1390 the word "corset" became part of the French language After that date both women and men adopted tight fitting, waist confining garments The fashion did not reach England

till much later, but we are told that Elizabeth appeared on a State occasion wearing a French corset sixteen inches at the waist! In an enlightening article (given to me by Mr. Angell, the Managing Director of the C.B. Factory) it is set down that the Virgin Queen did not hold the record for waist confinement, inasmuch as Marie de Medici, the wife of Henri IV, considered that a thirteen-inch waist was the correct size for a beauty of her time!

In this same article it is recorded that, in 1675, the costumiers protested against tailors having the monopoly of making stays for ladies, as "not decent and convenient to the modesty of women and girls." After that stays were made for women by women.

## 4

An enthusiast, an old retainer of forty years' service, escorted me round this wonderful factory. We began with the department where the raw material is stored. The cloth is called "broche." This broche in endless variety of quality and shades of colour used to be imported from France, Germany and America. It is significant that English manufacturers are now making it. I am assured that they may in time supply all of it. Even a masculine eye is arrested by the beauty and daintiness of this broche. My guide called my attention to the elastics of all widths and in shades to match the cloths, the busks and steels, the miles of ribbons, embroideries and silk trimmings, barrels full of eyelets—and what not. A woman would have lingered longer.

What interested me as much as anything else is the care-

ful scrutiny of every item before it leaves this department. Any flaw is instantly detected. It is also all important that supply of this raw material should walk (or run) hand in hand with the demand from the other departments. One hitch would throw the whole factory out of gear.

The Designing Room is Fancy's cave, where—as the writer of the article on my desk happily puts it—"ideas are brought to birth." The *accoucheurs* are all experts. Again I quote: "The growth of a new corset from an idea into an accomplished fact is a work of art."

It is

I saw the different pieces of a new corset being pinned on to a dummy, a robot without head, hands or feet. If this trying on passes all tests, the pieces are stitched together and the finished garment is fitted on to a human model. Finally, when the new model is pronounced perfect in fit, comfort, strength and symmetry, it passes into the works to be turned out in thousands of dozens!

It is the human side in these hives of industry which appeals to me. I take it that the young women who serve as mannequins in the designing room love their work, because it is so intimately personal. They must thank God that the corset so cunningly devised for them is now a miracle of comfort instead of an instrument of torture. The be-whiskered tag, "One must suffer to be beautiful," does not apply to the brassière and corset of this year of grace. Nevertheless I was amused when my guide handed me a popular garment known as a "pull-on," made of stout elastic cloth with no trimmings or embellishments, dear, I am sure, to Diana rather than Venus. These stream line articles may perhaps be worn by men, I forgot to ask.

One of the attendant nymphs whispered to me: "I like 'em best."

## 5

The Cutting Room is another highly specialized department. I was told that it takes many years for any employee to become an expert in this cutting out of designs for the "stitchers," whose acquaintance we shall make presently.

The "marker-out," when he has received his material from the stock room, uses cardboard patterns. In my ignorance I supposed that this was easy work. Not at all. The "marker-out" has to place his patterns on the cloth so deftly that there is no waste of valuable material, or as little as possible. Watching one at work I was amazed at his speed, the perfect co-ordination of hand and eye: once more —legerdemain.

The cutting-out of the patterned "plate" is done by hand knife-machines, with knives keen as razors, capable of cutting through the thickness of forty-eight layers of cloth. The cutter guides the knife unerringly with the skill begotten of long practice. If this expert wandered from the line of pattern, he would cause misfits and immeasurable trouble. But he too, like the marker-out, pursued the tenor of his way unflinching and swiftly. No machine could take his place.

The stitching and seaming department makes one blink. Here are gathered together innumerable young women, each in charge of a sewing machine which can work at the rate of 3,500 to 4,000 stitches a minute! I recalled Hood's *Song of the Shirt*.



## MY VAGABONDAGE

With fingers weary and worn,  
With eyelids heavy and red,  
A woman sat, in unwomanly rags,  
Plying her needle and thread—  
Sutch! Sutch! Sutch!  
In poverty, hunger, and dirt,  
And still with a voice of dolorous pitch  
She sang the "Song of the Shirt."

Work—work—work!  
My labour never flags,  
And what are its wages? A bed of straw,  
A crust of bread—and rags  
That shattered roof—and this naked floor—  
A table—a broken chair—  
And a wall so blank, my shadow I thank  
For sometimes falling there.

The "then" and the "now" in sharpest contrast. All these girls in the stitching department wore spotless white overalls. The huge room is light, bright, and perfectly ventilated. I could detect no sign of poverty, hunger, or dirt. The workers looked happy and healthy. Here, as elsewhere, accuracy is demanded—and supplied. Novices work apart on "practice" pieces under competent supervision. In about three months they achieve promotion, but it takes more than two years to make a skilled stitcher.

If any stitcher feels tired or faint, she can rest in a room hard by. This room was empty when I peeped into it. At Fortt's Biscuit Factory, the employees, male and female, have to work standing up. I asked a girl if she felt footsore at the end of the day? Apparently she did not, but the pluck of the modern miss may have deemed a fib justifiable. The stitchers in the C B Factory sit on comfortable chairs.

## CAKES AND CORSETS

It was difficult for me, such an ignoramus about machinery, to see with detachment the girl as apart from her machine. The pair worked together as if one, interdependently. That was the miracle. A machine might have half a dozen spools of thread and as many flashing needles. I wondered if such work was a terrible strain on the eyesight. It must be at first. Again, what effect does the din of machinery have on the nervous system? I am told—and I believe it to be true—that eyes and nerves and all muscles in our bodies adapt themselves to the work imposed upon them. Probably the younger women avail themselves of the rest-room.

Strapping and boning, as we follow the corset on its appointed path from stock-room to dispatch-room, exact less skill than stitching. Whalebone is no longer used. Does this diminish the profits of the whaling industry? Instead of whalebone, flexible, non-rusting steel strips are inserted in each corset by hand.

The eyeletting machines work at tremendous speed, punching small holes; the hooks are then attached to the eyes, and the garment is ready for "pressing."

## 6

This factory, so I am told, produces more corsets than any other in the world. They are supplied to five thousand drapers in this country alone. There are three hundred different models, and each model has its varying colours. Paris buys nine hundred dozen corsets a week!

Big business, not so colossally huge as the business done at Bedminster and Somerdale, but big enough in all conscience to stimulate interest and thought. I had to betake myself to our woodland garden to be alone after this bewildering experience of mass production. Here Nature was quite as busy with the daffies and primroses, working overtime, so I reflected. The dame doesn't have to sharpen knives or consider, the spendthrift, the running to waste of material.

The chestnuts are coming into leaf, the beeches and limes are manufacturing buds. Another hive of industry. We have in this garden about thirty varieties of shrubs and trees. Nature supplies to the world some thirty thousand. In the mahogany family there are three hundred varieties. With a mind attuned to commercial activities, I found myself marvelling at the recent discovery that artificial silk could be made out of wood!

The starry stitchwort is in bloom. I shouldn't have noticed it, I think, had I not just left the C B Factory. Has it ever cured stitch in the side? Has it ever been an antidote to the venom of a viper? This lovely flower is known in Devon as White Sunday, having reference to the white garments of neophytes baptized at Easter.

Not many years ago, I made a sustained effort to write in my garden. E F Benson used to do it, and may do it still. Any simple shelter from wind and rain suffices. You sit down and invoke the help of naiads, dryads and oreads. That, possibly, is where I slipped up. My work, such as it is, exacts undivided attention and application. If I hear a bird singing, I want to find it. Then comes the exasperating moment when my eye wanders to a familiar flower or shrub whose name has fled from my senile memory.

## CAKES AND CORSETS

It is such a sop to vanity when Jack, our head gardener, owns up frankly that his better memory is at fault. We talk together till he reminds me that he has work to do. There is no harder worker in Wessex, and he loves his work. I tell him that I love mine, and forthwith retire to my room.

## CHAPTER IV

### RAMBLING

*Edward Stillingfleet—The Canal—Apsley House—A Killjoy—Captain St Loe—Brassknocker Hill—Farleigh Castle—Tom Moore—Gastronomie—Colette—Dean Gaisford—Iford Gardens—A Tragedy—Paul Methuen—Selwood Forest—Freshford—George Robey—Success—Pre-Nash Bath—Catharine of Braganza—A Doctor with £5 000 a Year—Crippling Taxation.*

#### I

THE Victorians were ramblers, strolling to their objectives, they took the air, they paused frequently to survey not only the landscape but their own thoughts and feelings. Edward Stillingfleet, sometime Chaplain to the Merry Monarch, and Dean of St. Paul's, gave it as his opinion that 'wisdom does not lie in the rambling imaginations of men's minds.' Clarissa, for one, does not agree with this Very Reverend gentleman. "Wisdom," said she, 'does not lie, it tells the truth, and the rambling of imagination helps it to find the truth. Ask the great inventors and chemists how much they owe to their rambling imaginations.'

We agreed that the gentle art of rambling has given pride of place to scrambling—and left it at that. None the less, this talk provoked my stay at home friend to ask a question

## RAMBLING

"Have you rambled along our canal from Bath to Limpley Stoke?"

"No."

"Do it. How I wish I could come with you!"

I did it yesterday. Save for an angler or two, and a brace of sweethearts, I had the tow-path to myself. I commend this walk to the elderly who dislike hill-climbing and motor traffic.

Will this canal come into use again? Nobody knows. It belongs to the Great Western Railway Company, who made a clean sweep of barges and bargees. As a punishment, they are now confronted with the more active competition of the road lorries.

I deplore the passing of the barges which moved so silently, never disturbing the peace of the countryside. If old wine travelled on them, it did not take months to recover from the tranquil voyage. A collector of old Burgundies, with a well-stocked cellar beneath a manor-house situate on a tributary of Avon, told me that the vibration of a train was so disintegrating to an aged and noble wine that it had to be left in its bin, after a journey from London to Bath, for at least half a year! That has been my experience.

The canal might serve other purposes than the slow transportation of non-perishable goods. If England should become the playground of the world, the bathing, boating and angling possibilities of these disused water-ways would challenge attention. Even to-day there is an unsatisfied demand for pretty, inexpensive cottages not built on roaring thoroughfares.

The canal, in 1935, has little artificial about it. It might be the Avon, overshadowed as it is by trees, spanned by

many bridges Swans nest on its banks, and are fed by the children The locks are still in working order Ralph Allen used this canal to transport his huge stones. Next time you pass Apsley House, in Piccadilly, you can remind yourself that it was built, not for the Iron Duke, but for Lord Bathurst, out of stones quarried near this canal Bath stone lasts for ever—if it be truly laid What a sermon could be preached on this right laying of imperishable blocks, some of which weigh ten tons, but they have to be stacked for six months till they are purged of moisture

The canal was authorized to be built, at a cost of £200,000, in 1794 It is still used in summer time by pleasure boats, and now and again a barge loaded with timber passes through the many locks Practically, it has been out of action since 1914 If you buy a rod licence for a shilling, you may hope to catch the mighty luce, or pike, tench, roach and other coarse fish Dundas built the lovely aqueduct near Limpley Stoke

An angler, whom I engaged in talk, made a grim remark, when I deplored the decay of the canal's uses

"'Tis used," he said, "by suicides, nice quiet place for 'em"

Such tragedies, however, are infrequent.

A motor-boat plied between Bath and Bradford, carrying passengers It failed, so I understand, to pay its way

I had to tell Clarissa about my walk which had beguiled a Sunday afternoon She astounded me by calling my attention to a Sabbatarian who has aroused indignation in the youth of this city by denouncing walking upon the sands on Sunday! What a killjoy! After denouncing him, I turned over the pages of a book belonging to Clarissa,

written by Mrs. Wheatcroft in 1894, entitled *Picturesque Village Rambles*. The author cites an experience which befell a certain Captain St. Loe, who put into the port of Boston, Massachusetts, to pick up his wife who was awaiting him. Forgetful that it was a Sunday, the Captain kissed his wife on the quay! He was arrested, taken before the mayor, and heavily fined. Refusing to pay the fine, he was sentenced to sit for an hour on the gallows—which he did. Then he invited the mayor and corporation to a farewell luncheon on board his ship, an invitation gladly accepted. The ship got under weigh. The captain introduced his boatswain, and told him to administer thirty-nine lashes with the cat to each of his guests, enjoining him to “lay on with his best art and form.” The sticklers for the right observance of the Sabbath were then rowed ashore in a boat. The Captain and his wife sailed merrily away—homeward bound.

Walking gives the pedestrian time and opportunity to ask questions. Going to Limpley Stoke by the towpath, you can return through Combe Down if you climb Brass-knocker Hill, so called because an inn (now pulled down) on the summit of the hill had a huge brass knocker on its door. To this inn, every Good Friday, came at least a thousand Bathonians. The takings on this one day paid for the yearly rental. Did they take this walk to enjoy a panoramic view, or to eat some particular brand of Hot Cross Buns?

I have made a special pilgrimage to Farleigh Castle, once the seat of the Hungerfords, with a chapel in fine



preservation enshrining their tombs. These Hungerfords were great people. Their castle, in which they reigned supreme during three centuries, is now a ruin, but unlike most ruins—Norham, for example—happy excavations (as at Glastonbury), give the visitor vision of what the castle was when the gallant Sir Walter, and his long bowmen, marched out of it on their way to Agincourt. The outer walls and a few towers are still standing. Charles II was entertained here by Sir Edward Hungerford, a notorious spendthrift, nicknamed "The Extravagant." This wastrel sold thirty manors, and Hungerford House in London. On its site was established Hungerford Market. After his death the castle passed to a Bayton, of Spye Park.

Out of that enlightening and slightly scandalous chronicle, *Cokayne's Complete Peerage*, I have gleaned more information about the mighty Sir Walter. He not only distinguished himself pre-eminently in the wars with France, but was Admiral of the Fleet in 1416, Sheriff of Wilts, M P for both Wilts and Somerset, Speaker of the House of Commons, Steward of the Household to Henry Hotspur, installed K G, Lord High Treasurer 1425-31, and summoned to Parliament as a baron in 1425. He died at Farleigh Castle and was buried in Salisbury Cathedral. In 1748 the male line of the Hungerfords became extinct.

When Tom Moore stayed at Bowood in 1823, he talked of the sepulchres of the Hungerfords at Farleigh. "The bodies, he writes, 'were preserved in pickle. The shoulder of a Lady Margaret was uncovered and found firm and white.' An antiquarian introduced a quill into it, in order to extract some of the pickle and taste it. His remark was "Very stimulant."

Pierre Loti, in his *Mariage de Loti*, entitles one short chapter *Gastronomie*.

“La chair des hommes blancs a goût de banane mûre. . . .”

In the chapel is some interesting stained glass, ancient and modern. An excellent little guide-book gives the legend of Saint Colette. When she was born her parents wished that she might enter a convent and eventually become Abbess. But the child happened to be a dwarf and ugly, whereas an Abbess—by the good rights of things—should be tall and beautiful. The pious parents prayed that Colette might become so. The child awoke one morning to find that these prayers had been answered. The stained glass shows the dwarf Colette in her cot; beneath is a large canopied bed in which Colette lies after her transfiguration.

This chapel is a museum. The black-letter Bible, once chained to the Jacobean pulpit, is known as a “He” Bible, because “he” is substituted for “she” in the Book of Ruth.

It is most remarkable that the magnificent marble effigies of Sir Edward and Margaret his wife are without blemish, undefaced by the scribblings and scratchings of 'Arry and 'Arriet. Compare these with the alabaster effigies in Wells Cathedral.

A Lord Hungerford, during the reign of Henry VIII, was accused of imprisoning his wife in what is called to-day the Lady Tower. She wrote to Secretary Cromwell: “I am under the custody of my lord's chaplain, who hath once or twice poyson'd me, as he will not deny on examination. . . . I should die for lack of sustenance, had not the poor women of the country, of their charity, brought me to my window at night such meat or drink as they had. . . .” Four years

was this unhappy lady kept prisoner until her husband's execution on Tower Hill. It is affirmed that she was on easy terms with Wild Darrell of Littlecote. Could she have been the mysterious female who was brought to bed at Littlecote and whose infant was thrust into the fire by Wild Darrell? Hardly possible, inasmuch as Wild Darrell was haled before Judge Popham, and acquitted, in the reign of Queen Elizabeth.

## 3

At Iford Manor, near Freshford, was born that great Greek scholar, Dean Gaisford, who hated to return borrowed books. Here my friend, the late Harold Peto, laid out the gardens which he loved with a love passing the love of women. They are (or were) open to the public on payment of a shilling. I bespeak a visit to them. I am deeply in Peto's debt, because he designed the stone staircase which leads from the upper terrace in my garden at Widcombe to the yew bordered pleasance below, possibly the last work he did. He was insistent that I should pave this upper terrace with stone flags even as he had paved his lordly terrace at Iford. When I protested on account of the expense, he exclaimed "If it were mine, I'd sell my shirt to do it." I replied "Would your shirt fetch the cash needed?" He told me how he came to buy Iford Manor. A friend of his (and mine), the late Avray Tipping, another famous gardener, said "Harold, you are going to buy an ancient Tudor manor house, you haven't heard of it, you haven't seen it. Now you have heard of it, and you will see it immediately, if you see it, you will buy it."

My brother and I bought this old manor under similar conditions.

Between Iford and Westwood is a well. In a cottage near the well lived a father (a widower) and his son. Each fell in love with the same pretty girl; but neither told the other. Finally the father married the maid secretly and brought her home along as a surprise, a surprise indeed to the son, inasmuch as the girl had promised to marry him. Forthwith, in a fit of jealous rage, the son killed his father and his stepmother.

The cottage is reputed to be haunted. A second tragedy, years afterwards, took place in it.

The old houses in and about this part of the Avon Valley were built for the most part by the rich weavers of Bradford, men of taste. That noble treasure house, Corsham Court, with its magnificent collection of pictures, belonged to the most famous of these weavers, Paul Methuen, who, in 1659, introduced Flemish weavers of the finest cloth. Part of Bradford is still called Dutch Barton. The descendants of these Dutchmen do not look like the men and women we see in Holland, whereas on the West Coast of Ireland and near the Pointe du Raz in Brittany the peasantry have distinctly Iberian characteristics.

Before the railway came this Vale of Avon must have been one of the most beautiful and sequestered valleys in the kingdom. Here was Selwood Forest of which we know so little. King Arthur may have hunted in it. Till recently all the slopes of the hills were heavily wooded. Had Milton seen it when he wrote of "embosomed" trees?

Freshford is another village of the hill, and the builders of the houses and cottages had to exercise their wits, as they did at Clovelly, to prevent their stones rolling down into

the valley Even as Lacock is spacious (being of the plain), so Freshford is cribbed It is easy to lose one's way in Freshford in the narrow winding little streets In many of them one car cannot pass another, but the whole has enchantment, here lavender-scented old maids may feel that they are at their ease in another *Cranford*

## 4

A caption—"It is never too late to succeed"—challenged my attention this morning, the heading of a short article by that great public benefactor, George Robey Both he and Harry Lauder have earned the heartfelt gratitude of millions, not to mention salaries beyond the dreams of avarice I often wonder which of the two "W G's" was the greater man—Gladstone or Grace? Is it possible to compare them after the fashion of long ago, when schoolboys, like myself, were enjoined to draw a parallel between Hannibal and Scipio Africanus?

George Robey loves to put "teasers" to his audiences. I have known men to whom success did come too late, when, physically, they were unable to enjoy it. Danaë died of a golden rain Success is a word difficult to define A favourable or prosperous termination of a task is not happy, because an end of any labour informed by the love of the working would be lamentable There is virtue, as Robey points out, in the saying "Hard work is the only real form of amusement." The success that can never come too late is the success that means advancement. Men like Edison, who regarded success as a stepping stone to higher endeavour are to be envied, if they remain physically sound Ill health

sours what the world calls success, but ill-health triumphant over itself, disdaining self-pity, has the hall-mark of glorious achievement.

Quibbling over the meaning of words is amusing. Taking success at its face value we reckon it up in terms of L.S.D., unless the conqueror has achieved fame without cash, which has happened to some of our poets. Still, we can approach the word from another angle sharply acute so far as it concerns not the general public but the man himself. Does he, when he sums up the results of a long life devoted to one end, whatever that end may be, think of the many pleasant things which he has left undone? Does he regret the untasted dishes of life? The man most to be envied is he who searches out and tries all ways which are not low ways. The man of many facets reflects and transmits light. We ought to be interested in everything that appeals to the senses, particularly the eye, everything that comes under the head of beauty and cunning craftsmanship, but how many can walk through our museums, picture galleries, and Kew Gardens with real appreciation of what they see?

## 5

Clarissa insists that I should write briefly of the Bath in the pre-Wood and pre-Nash days, when, for instance, the Merry Monarch adventured hither with his youthful Consort, Catharine of Braganza. This provoked discussion, raising the old, old question: "Are persons more interesting than places?" I submit that they are, because persons make places. If Elizabeth, and other royal personages, had not progressed to the Queen City, it is likely that Beau Nash

would have lived elsewhere. He, Ralph Allen, and the Woods made Bath what it is. Most of us have forgotten what it was. And here, once more, I must raise my voice, not querulously, against the guide-book addict, cutting notches upon his pilgrim's staff, "swanking" (to others of like kidney) about the number of cities he has seen but, unlike Ulysses, having little knowledge of the men who dwelt in them.

My friend has dug up certain letters which I shall print with the warning that they may be skipped if found lacking in entertainment. Pepys mentions Catharine as "grown very debbonair" and hints that my lady Castlemaine is "falling quite out of favour." He has little to say about this visit. However, upon the evening when His Sacred Majesty returned from the Bath to London, he supped with the fair Barbara. Father Thames had flooded her kitchen, and the cook reported that a chine of beef could not be roasted. "Zounds!" exclaimed the lady—"she must set the house on fire but it should be roasted." The letters which interested Clarissa throw light upon an unhappy marriage. Much as we know about Charles, we know little about Catharine. There was talk of a marriage between the Prince of Wales and this great heiress when the children were respectively fourteen and seven years of age. Her immense dowry was the lure. When the couple met, Charles became enamoured of a convent-bred bride. Miss Strickland says (cynically for her) that great heiresses must expect to marry unhappily. When I repeated this to Clarissa, she made me laugh by citing the case of a young penniless man of her acquaintance who had not only married a great heiress, but, after being endowed with all her worldly goods, incontinently spoke of them as his! He had the impudence to complain to Clarissa

of his wife's extravagance. "She has cajoled me," he said, "into buying her a sable coat. What do you say to that?" I asked Clarissa what she did say. Her eyes twinkled. "You have all my sympathy," she assured the young man, "but surely your wife, not you, is going to pay for the garment?"

Charles behaved disgracefully in forcing his mistress upon his wife. Then a reconciliation took place. The royal pair travelled to Bath. No historian, so far as I know, has used these letters.

*August, 1663. From the Countess Dowager of Devonshire to Lord Bruce:*

The King and Queen came from the Wells (Tunbridge Wells?) on Tuesday last. The Queen looks very well and more merry than I have ever seen her. The resolution is this day the King goes his progress to the Bath with the Queen, the Duke and Duchess of York. They design a very good journey and yet no great court. . . .

*August 29th, 1663 (presumably from the same quill):*

His Majesty dined with Sir John Talbot, and from thence marched to the Bath, where their Majesties, attended by diverse eminent Persons, and all the Maids of Honour, entered the town on horseback, to the abundant satisfaction of the People, who had thereby the Blessing of so Illustrious and Divine a Prospect. . . .

*September 5th, 1663. (The same to the same.)*

His Sacred Majesty with his Royal Consort were entertained at Bristoll. . . .

*September 6th, 1663. Guicciardini Ayloff to Roger Kenyon.*

The Queen, they say, has spent her time in Physic. . . . We all pray for a good effect. . . .



Reading between the lines of these letters a poignant situation reveals itself, which is a reason for printing them. Charles had much in him that came from his grandfather, Henri IV. A monarch, even as the humblest of his subjects, craves love, and if he marries for convenience he is not likely to get it. Catharine stirred his pity and compassion. She was a stranger in a strange land, Charles had to talk to her in Spanish. Possibly he planned this progress with "no great Court" as a belated honeymoon. But, alas! the little bride was "in physic." Accordingly, a too-gay dog returned to the robustious, jolly, mirth loving Castlemaine.

It is difficult to resurrect the Bath of 1663. The seventeenth-century remains are hidden away, revealed by a wall or two carefully preserved. The streets were mean and narrow. The Abbey remains, but only an architect can see it as it appeared to Bishop Montague when he set about its restoration. There is a map, now before me, drawn by Joseph Gilmore in 1694, which shows the walls encircling a very small city.

Of Roman *Aquæ Sulis*, we have the baths, the greatest architectural monument of Roman Britain. In *The Book of Bath*, published in 1925, there is a vivid and convincing chapter dealing with the *thermæ* which invests the reader with a toga and takes him back nearly two thousand years. Then the city was sacked in A.D. 577 by Ceawlin, who made a ruin of "palaces, baths, and temples." The baths were not uncovered till 1755! Charles II never saw what we see to-day. Portions of these palaces and temples, of greatest interest to archæologists, are in the Royal Literary and Scientific Institution now removed to Queen Square. Although the Roman Baths were buried, the actual thermal

springs became famous in Saxon times. Queen Henrietta Maria expressed a wish to visit Bath, but she was told that "the streets and public ways were become so many dung-hills, slaughter-houses and pig-sties. The Baths were like Bear-gardens, and Modesty was entirely shut out of them, People of both sexes bathing by day or night naked, and dogs, cats, and even human creatures hurled over the rails into the water while People were bathing in it."

Perhaps these conditions accounted for Catharine of Braganza's indisposition.

Macaulay, in his *History of England*, after mentioning that our Milsom Street was an open field lying beyond the walls, goes on: "The gentlemen who visited the Springs slept in rooms hardly as good as garrets. The floors of the dining-rooms were uncarpeted, and were coloured brown with a wash made of soot and small beer in order to hide the dirt. . . . The best apartments were hung with coarse woollen stuff, and were furnished with rush-bottomed chairs. . . ."

Macaulay, I think, culled this account of Bath and its lodgings from John Wood's Preface, written *circa* 1749; he was not, need it be added, writing of the Bath of his day.

Sir John Talbot, with whom Their Majesties dined before they entered the Bath, was a territorial magnate who lived at Lacock Abbey (still in the possession of the Talbot family), a descendant of a favourite of Henry VIII, to whom the Abbey and its lands were given, when the holy nuns were dispossessed. Charles must have admired a village of the plain not very different then from what it is now, an abiding joy to the eye. We may be sure that he was entertained magnificently. Let us hope that the clerk of the

weather was kind to the Lord's Anointed. A Royal Progress in pouring rain would have dampened horribly the spirits of travellers on horseback.

## 6

According to a statute of Antoninus, five physicians in any small town enjoyed immunity from taxation. Antoninus was wiser than our Chancellor of the Exchequer. I take it that any doctor in Bath with a professional income of five thousand pounds is deemed a rich man. Well, is he? I have jotted down a few figures which are disconcerting. Dr X has no private means. He lives in the Circus, he has a wife and four children. He cannot save a penny. Our tub thumpers at Lenin's Corner might suggest that he *could live in a cottage, cut down expenses, send his children to the national schools, and save half his income.* But, if he did this, he would lose half his practice and his prestige. Surtax, income tax, rates and taxes amount to nearly £2,000. He wishes, naturally enough, to give his children the same education which his parents gave him. His school bills, so he tells me, *all in*, including allowances, clothes, travelling expenses and what not, leave little change out of £1,200. He is left with £1,800. Out of this he has to pay the rent of his house, dress himself and his wife, subscribe liberally to charities, pay the weekly bills, the wages of his servants and chauffeur, the upkeep of a car, the upkeep—with all its expensive up-to-date apparatus—of his consulting rooms, and entertain modestly. There is the annual summer holiday of one month at the sea. He *has to insure his life heavily.* Dr X assures me that these current (and unavoidable)

#### RAMBLING

expenses amount to £1,800. He is not a rich man; he is, paradoxically, less well off than many doctors in Bath who have no position to keep up, and who can save a little (very little) out of incomes half the size of his!

What applies to X applies also to other professional and successful workers. What a handicap to brains and initiative!

## CHAPTER V

### TWO HOSPITALS

*Uncivil War in Bath—Triumph of Stalwarts—A Sweet-smelling Sanctuary—Starvation Corner—Solaria—The Maternity Ward—Letter to a Famous Doctor—The Operating Theatres—Thank God for Lord Lister—The Ministering Angels—Beau Nash as Beggar—A National Hospital—An Ancient Case-book—Electrical Therapy—Comic Relief—The Chapel—Old Time Patients*

#### I

I HAVE spent an afternoon at our Royal United Hospital, a most highly disciplined hierarchy, where efficiency is omnipotent. A maid has to bend her knee in the presence of a nurse, the nurse obeys a sister without a word of "backchat," the sister curtsies to Matron, who, in her turn, has to carry out with unswerving loyalty and devotion the commands of physicians and surgeons.

Uncivil war raged in Bath when the Progressives urged the removal of this hospital from Beau Street to the heights of Combe Park. Reaction girded its loins and tightened its belt, not forgetting to button up its pockets. False prophets of both sexes predicted that the cold cash (£150,000), could never be raised at a moment when the whole world was impoverished, they affirmed that out patients would refuse

## TWO HOSPITALS

to climb the hill where the new building now stands; they were positive that it would crumble and disintegrate under crushing debt.

Nevertheless, the stalwarts triumphed over the weak-kneed. It is not generally known that the old hospital was in debt to the amount of some £10,000. The new hospital is free from debt. The out-patients have increased in number by twenty-five per cent.; and it is admitted, even by the ranks of Tuscany, that the old hospital was not good enough either for patients, nurses, or doctors. It lay in a spot shut out from sun and fresh air but not from noise. The accommodation for the staff was lamentable. The old wards were bad in design and inconvenient in arrangement. The buildings could not be extended. Quite obviously to any impartial person the reactionaries had not a leg to stand on, but they waved their crutches to the last and refused to surrender.

The story of the victory of potency over impotency is epic. The Progressives were led by the Mayor of the city, Mr. Aubrey Bateman, who laid the foundation-stone of the new building in 1931. He never looked back; he gave of his best indefatigably; he became a Prince of Beggars. Behind him stood a Prince of Industry, the late Mr. Stanley Wills, who subscribed magnificently and went on subscribing! Mr. Bateman invited us to double our subscriptions. The present writer, hypnotized by such a personality, essayed an appeal to the nation over the etheric waves. To his surprise the response far surpassed expectation. One lady wrote: "I have never been to Bath; I have never heard of this hospital, but I liked one or two of your books, so I have great pleasure in sending you eighteen pence." A railway porter, who had been to Bath, collected pennies in the

Midlands and sent a grant in aid which delighted all of us—perhaps a widower's mite!

## 2

I shall begin with the kitchen. A tall chef received me in a large, specklessly clean room, which might have been (and was) an up to date operating theatre. He has to feed about two hundred and sixty persons by day and night. The night nurses have breakfast at 7.30 p.m. and dine at 8.30 a.m. Each carries to her ward, when she goes on duty, a Thermos box which holds a hot luncheon eaten when the rest of the world is fast asleep. The chef, so it seemed to me, is not overstaffed with three kitchen maids and a 'vegetable lady'. But the battery *de cuisine* is labour saving to the nth degree. I beheld a wonderful machine for stirring puddings. I poked my nose into shining ovens where joints were sizzling, I held that same nose over huge cauldrons of simmering soup.

Loath to leave this magician's cave, I was shewn next the larder, the frigidaire, and a sweet smelling sanctuary upholstered with vegetables in perfect condition. Despite this splendid provision for patients and staff, there are still a few dishevelled witted Bathonians who believe that an up to-date house of healing is a Starvation Corner! The father of a patient sent a few eggs for his daughter's delectation regardless of the fact that eggs were not part of her dietary. He pushed his way into the Matron's room when she happened to be dining. Not satisfied with this intrusion, he indulged himself in defamation of

## TWO HOSPITALS

character: "Them eggs," he told the hospital gardener, "was sent by me for my pore girl, but the Matron up and ate 'em!"

### 3

The wards are in such salient contrast to nearly all wards in old hospitals that I shrink from odious comparisons. Many of them have balconies, solaria. I may have been fortunate, but passing slowly through these airy rooms so free from the odours of antiseptics, so perfectly lighted and warmed, I did not see one patient who looked either uncomfortable or in pain.

I hated to leave the Children's Wards with their toys and flowers. One mite of seven was on his back with both legs at right-angles to his body in slings. This small boy was hugging a doll. I asked him if he were comfy, and he said that he was. He laughed when I wanted to know if he were married. "Not yet," he replied, with a side glance at a pretty nurse. Another fat little urchin with rosy cheeks looked so robust that I asked the Matron what ailed him. She whispered: "He has to nourish a tape-worm as well as himself, a most difficult reptile to dislodge." I had to laugh, but I told Matron that the boy was a walking advertisement of her kitchen, and that the reptile probably was of the same opinion.

The Maternity Ward, so different from what I had imagined it to be, made me tell Matron that if I found myself about to become a mother, I should ask for admission. At the foot of each bed hangs the cradle. One woman, with white hair, smiled



so pleasantly at me that I bowed reverentially "Is her name Sarah?" I asked. Matron replied "It ought to be. She is fifty six, and the baby in the cradle is her seventeenth."

Queen Anne, not Sarah

The 'labour' room, rubber floored, with double doors, is hard by. What a considerate addition! No confinement can be easy, but here it is made as easy as possible thanks to the new anæsthetics.

All the patients in this hospital, including the children, have ear phones. What the wireless means to some of them would call for another chapter. I should like to have asked the men if they listened in to crooners, jazz, and too shrill soprano with any pleasure. I don't, but there are others. Readers of this chapter with bowels of compassion and with books to spare might send of their abundance a few volumes to our library, which is still in its salad days. I asked Matron what reading appealed most to the patients. Novels have pride of place. She asked a child recently what it wished to read, and the child replied solemnly "I just love a 'cyclopædia.'"

Before I leave the Maternity Ward I must tell a story which was a source of innocent merriment to the staff, and is now enshrined as a classic. A General Practitioner told a patient that her appendix ought to be removed. She was willing that this should be done, but suggested that a baby ought to come first. The baby was duly born in the Maternity Ward, the mother returned to her cottage. After a decent interval of rest and recuperation, the doctor reminded her that the appendix might be a source of grave trouble in the immediate future. I print her reply.

## TWO HOSPITALS

DEAR DOCTOR,

Thank you for the post-card. I don't want to come to hospital now as since I saw you Dr. X seduced me, and I had my baby alright and am now feeling much better. Yours affectionately,

Mrs. Y.

Dr. X is our most famous *accoucheur*.

Mrs. Y has the vote.

### 4

There are two Operating Theatres—one for orthopædic cases only—each, need it be said, the last word in equipment and design. There are also fixed and portable X-ray installations costing many thousands of pounds. Again, as with the "labour" room, consideration for the feelings of the patient is of paramount importance. The precautions taken against any form of septic poisoning filled me with awe and admiration. In the good old days when England was supposed to be so much merrier than it is to-day, any major operation, however successful, might be followed by incurable septicæmia. Occasionally "swabs" were disconcertingly missing. There is now a fool-proof device against leaving swabs inside a patient. So many swabs are taken, hot from the sterilizing drums, by the sister in attendance and handed to the operator. Every swab, after use, is thrust into a hole on a sheet of metal. Each bears witness to its presence till the tale—say ten, or a dozen—is complete.

The operator and his acolyte hold their hands beneath running water for a few minutes before they slip on their thin india-rubber gloves. Every garment they wear is

## MY VAGABONDAGE

sterilized I have just glanced into a booklet entitled *The Surgeon*, by C Jennings Marshall, happily free from medical terminology and technicalities, easy (and enlightening) reading for all of us. It was published in 1932. I offer no apology for citing two passages

It is in the nature of things that the vast proportion of surgery must be increasingly done at hospitals in the future

I wonder how many of the reasonably well to-do realize that operations performed in a private house are fraught with grave risks? After spending half an hour in the theatre of the R.U.H., I made up my mind definitely that if the knife of the surgeon impended above me, I should insist upon the operation taking place at a hospital, not in my own home. Till recently the home treatment was preferable, because the risks of infection in a house of infection were greater. To-day they are immeasurably less. The arguments against any form of State service are familiar to every man in the street who shrinks, naturally enough, from the machinery of a hospital. But to-day the man has triumphed over a machine used by him to amplify and safeguard his individual skill and experience. The purification undergone by a surgeon before operating is a ritual. From his white rubber boots to the mask on his face, he is wearing garments that are germ proof. After operating he strips to the buff and takes a shower bath! Here is a thumb-nail sketch of the pre-Lister surgeons

They operated always in the same coat—usually a discarded frock-coat—filthy. (I spare the reader too nauseating details) after past operations instruments might have a perfunctory wash and polish the knife would have an occasional wipe on the

## TWO HOSPITALS

frock-coat; casual visitors interested in the work might nonchalantly insert their fingers into the wound to feel the state of affairs. Nowadays, of course, utterly monstrous and unthinkable.

Let us thank God for Lord Lister!

The tranquillity of this new hospital, without and within, struck me as an outstanding feature. I marched with Matron down a rubber-paved corridor where I saw a sign: *Silence*. It led to the sleeping-quarters of the night nurses. What chance had they of undisturbed slumbers in the old hospital?

I shall not attempt any description of the huge building, which occupies three sides of a square. There are lines of huts, dating from the war days, which are something of an eyesore. Time and money will wipe these from the landscape. The view is panoramic. On hot days a cooling breeze creeps up from the Bristol Channel.

Upon the ground surrounding the hospital, a dump-heap two years ago, a personal friend of mine has worked indefatigably to make a garden worthy of his fastidious taste. It charms the eye already. There was no garden in Beau Street.

I hope that visitors to Bath will devote at least an hour to go over this hospital, which is indeed a "show place," and a splendid monument to the spirit of progress. It stands white upon the green hills of Somerset, immaculately so. It holds at present 212 beds; it will hold double the number ten years hence, because there is ample room for extension. It is nearer Heaven than the old hospital by some four hundred feet.

Young nurses come to this hospital for three years' training. During that time they earn about enough to

pay for fees and books with little left over for frocks and frills. In addition to their work in and out of the wards, they have to attend many lectures. Strain is imposed upon mind and body.

A good nurse is indeed a ministering angel

# 5

The Royal Mineral Water Hospital is a national hospital. Till recently, Bathonians were not eligible for treatment. It was founded in 1738, under the patronage of Beau Nash, Ralph Allen, and John Wood. Possibly, the now almost obsolete injunction "Go to Bath!" was not an impertinence in the eighteenth century, but kindly advice proffered to needy cripples. Nash collected more than £2,000, beguiling forty guineas from the old Duchess of Queensberry at the card table, with the plea "Charity covers a multitude of sins." It is history that the gay sinners subscribed handsomely.

This hospital, situated close to the hot springs (where it ought to be), is appealing for funds (1) to rebuild it upon a better and larger site and (2) to endow adequately a research department. Despite reactionary opposition from the few, it has now been definitely—and (so far as the governors are concerned) *unanimously*—decided that the old building with insufficient accommodation for patients cannot be reconstructed upon modern lines. It is significant that the doctors and architects were to a man against such reconstruction. Ultimately, the City Fathers saw eye to eye with them. In brief, the necessity of building a new hospital has (after much cut and thrust correspondence in

the *Bath and Wilts Chronicle and Herald*) imposed itself upon nearly all Bathonians, the more so because the "tightwads" have been assured that no claim will be presented on their pockets.

This hospital deals only with the scourge of rheumatism and its kindred affections. The average stay of a patient undergoing treatment is forty-one days. Cripples are no longer carried to the King's Spring; the mineral water is brought to them.

To my surprise a famous doctor has just told me that the causes of rheumatism are still obscure. Its devastating effects, the slow paralysis, the helplessness of the victim, the excruciating pain are familiar even to children. More, rheumatism, in one form or another, affects a large proportion of our people. Here—so I am credibly informed—the percentage of radical cures, apart from the mitigation of pain, is greater than in any other hospital. We have behind us the clinical experience of two hundred years. Neither Buxton nor Harrogate can offer what is our inalienable possession: the only natural hot mineral springs in the kingdom.

Would that I had the golden tongue of Chrysostom to plead with some of my readers to help us in the work ahead. It is not merely the restoration of activity to our fellow countrymen but of efficiency, because from Land's End to John o' Groats there are stricken thousands who wish to work and are racked in mind by the despairing conviction that others have to work for them.

Let us go through this hospital.

The first impression on entering the present building is that of space. The visitor finds himself in a noble hall with a noble staircase in front of him. Here I was welcomed

by the Registrar and Matron. We passed into another noble room, the Board Room, beautifully furnished and lighted, perfectly proportioned, hung with portraits of sometime celebrities connected with the past history of the hospital, with fine windows overlooking the garden, once the rectory garden, but to-day the only solarium for the patients. It seemed to me a thought paradoxical that a national institution so desperately at a loss for space should be so spacious. The great corridors are too spacious, the basement might be the crypt of a cathedral. In the hospital at this moment are patients from some forty-six counties in the United Kingdom and from one hundred and sixty towns. There are only two Bathonians! At the risk of boring my readers, I must lay what stress I can upon the urgency which has not been made sufficiently public. There has been no national appeal since 1861! Let it be repeated again and again, that the treatment is free, that our countries and towns are relieved of the responsibility and cost of special treatment given so generously to their own people. How "special" that treatment is I shall point out presently.

I asked to see the kitchen, larder, store-rooms and so forth, first. They are in the basement, a fine basement, it is true, but a labyrinth of the past, an object lesson to any modern architect of how "not to do it." During the past seventy years, the management, from the President to the youngest Probationer, have been constrained to make the best (which they have done) out of what was best two centuries ago. I beheld a museum of antiquities. I peered, with a laundrymaid giggling discreetly at my side, into a mangle filled with rocks, not long ago worked by hand, still serviceable. I saw the lady of the larder

## TWO HOSPITALS

stirring a Gargantuan pudding with her own fair fingers! Nearly all labour-saving gadgets were conspicuously absent. The coal cellars are in the wrong place. Needless to mention that there was no rubber carpeting anywhere. We trod on stone or oak. Here, till recently, the nurses had their sleeping quarters! Here they still eat and have their sitting-room.

I left this basement with a fuller understanding of what all basements in old houses mean to domestic servants.

The wards are almost empty during the day, packed to capacity at night, too big, too like huge barrack-rooms, difficult to keep cool in summer and warm in winter, dreary to look at, not too well ventilated. Here, as in the basement, even the most captious critic would have to admit that the makeshift is admirable: a triumph of the present over the past, with the past as solidly obstructive as stones and mortar can make it.

I spent some time in the two rooms where the men and women pass the day. Some of the men are able to play billiards. Many were playing cards, or reading, or talking. Very few were writing. Those able to walk abroad are allowed to do so. I was struck by the general air of well-being. The Registrar explained this. Treatment mitigates pain. Unhappily, such treatment is only palliative. So little was known about rheumatism when this hospital was founded that doctors—I cite an excerpt from an ancient case-book—held that it might be caused by washing in cold water when the ablutioner was hot! To cure rheumatism—a phrase hateful to the medical profession—may take years. This is the only hospital where a patient can have six months' treatment free of all charges. I found this entry: "Patient admitted September 6th, 1750, discharged,



greatly recovered, May 20th, 1752 " He spent 622 days in the hospital Dr Summers, in his account of the success of warm bathing in *Paralytick Disorders*, writes "Allen Lane was the most miserable object ever beheld, his arms hung entirely useless by his sides, the hands dropped inwards greatly emaciated, and the fingers so strongly contracted that it was not in the power of force to move them, the legs so wasted as to appear only covered with skin, and contracted up to his buttocks so that he always stood on his knees This lad by the use of Bathing soon began to recover and has been for some time able to walk without crutches, he has now (Oct 4, 1751), the free use of his hands, the legs and arms are become plump, etc., etc

What an advertisement of *Aquæ Sulis*!

I looked with interest at the sedan chair which might have carried this boy to the King's Bath Now and again the chairman got drunk, and then the patient, on his way to the pain dispelling waters, was "dropped"

Recently, another patient as cruelly crippled and afflicted as Allen Lane, danced out of the hospital after long treatment, singing *Tipperary*!

This miraculous mitigation of pain is an outstanding feature Small wonder that the patients looked happy and comfortable

What the Operating Theatre of the Royal United Hospital means to the observer is embodied in the electrical room here, presided over by a Sister (with a sense of humour), who is a past pluperfect mistress of massage, Medical Gymnastics, and Light and Electric therapy I asked for a demonstration. A huge basin was filled with mineral water, hot from the bowels of the earth A placid pool till it is aerated and electrified Then the pool becomes a whirlpool,

## TWO HOSPITALS

which evokes a vision in miniature of the whirlpool below Niagara Falls where poor Webb was drowned. I plunged in my hand and wrist. A delicious soothing thrill ran from my finger-tips to my elbow. The treatment lasts for twenty minutes. In a room adjoining is a Bethesda which holds ten persons. Those who cannot walk are lowered into it. But some of these, upborne by the water, can walk in it; another miracle to them.

Before taking leave of the Sister, I demanded comic relief. Many innocents, slaves to the preconceived idea, protest against the electricity before it is applied. I hardly dare to print one story, because it sounds so incredible, but it happened lately, and is too funny to be left out. A helpless patient complained that his rheumatic pains were no longer confined to certain joints. He spoke of them querulously as "darting about." He happened to be lying on his bed fully clothed. A mountain of a helpless man was in labour, groaning and travailing, and when a nurse removed his clothes—out crept a mouse! Did the nurse scream? No. She killed the mouse, which ought, so I suggested, to have been stuffed and placed in a glass case.

## 6

A long corridor is full of machines and contraptions, serving as arms and legs to the helpless. The muscles of patients become atrophied from disuse. Many are convinced that they will never walk again. I can conceive of few spectacles more pathetic than that of a man placed for the first time into one of these walking machines. He must learn how to manipulate it. The Sister told me that profuse

perspiration poured down the faces of patients before they had travelled two yards. Partly excitement, as one may well believe. And then followed the joy of progression after months or years of stagnation.

There is no Operating Theatre in this hospital. Patients who have to undergo painful treatment are given a whiff of ether. During the past two years there has been only one death.

Again I must lay stress upon the cardinal virtues of this great house of healing. The battle against pain goes on incessantly. If that pain could be exorcised for ever! Nearly all rheumatoid affections yield to treatment, if taken in time, any delay may be disastrous. In many cases the ordinary home treatment is inadequate, but the patient, naturally enough, shrinks from leaving home.

The Chapel is another noble room. Service is not obligatory for patients, but they fill the pews. The Welsh sing delightfully, there is a small organ of fine quality of tone, and a good choir. When I asked "Does the congregation sing?" I was assured that they sang lustily pæans of thanksgiving.

On the farther side of the garden, apart from the main building, is the annexe where the research work is carried on under grave disabilities. If the general public responds to the appeal for funds, the potentialities of this special department are immeasurable.

For the curious only, I print a few excerpts from the Case Book of 1750, a ponderous folio. These serve to show that even in the middle of the eighteenth century famous doctors sent their refractory patients to Bath—and not in vain.

## TWO HOSPITALS

NEWTON HIGBORN, of St. George's Bloomsbury, aged 20, by working at the Painting Business has been greatly afflicted with the Cholic, or Dry Gripes, and has so far lost the use of his hands as to be disabled from working at his trade. . . . The assistance he has had from Guy's Hospital has not been able to relieve him. Admitted October the 29th, 1751. Discharged, May the 2nd, 1752.

ROBERT ENGLAND, of Bradford, Wilts, aged upwards of 60, Cloth-worker, about five weeks since was seized with a pain in his left shoulder, which was apprehended to be a Rheumatism, for which he was bled and took medicines . . . but they have proved ineffectual. . . . He has nothing to support himself but his Labour and his Arm. Admitted Dec. 11th, 1751. Discharged, cured, May the 28th, 1752.

BETTY KEECH, of the Parish of Toller, aged 28, was seized with violent pain in the head. The tongue was benumb'd, and her right side weak and painful. Was bled, vomited, and blistered, and took such Medicines as her Physician advis'd without success. Admitted March 30th, 1754. Discharged March 17th, 1755, after 378 days in hospital.

WILLIAM NORTH, of Stamford, aged 32, has grown more helpless, having no use of his lower extremities, and is exceeding desirous of going to Bath, and is undoubtedly a Great Object of Charity, if judged Proper. Admitted 18th Jan. Discharged, no better, after 185 days.

The "discharged, no better, after 185 days," speaks for itself. William North had grown more and more helpless before he presented himself for treatment. That is the curse of rheumatism. It begins with a negligible ache, which passes away with the application of liniment. The cause of that ache remains, scotched, not killed. It is as difficult to exorcise rheumatism from the system, as to expel the bee from the bonnet of a faddist or crank.

Reluctantly, I must set down my conviction that workers in our hospitals, from the resident doctors to the maids of all work, are overworked and underpaid. Till quite recently the nurses were underfed! It is also plain to me that no young woman should contemplate taking up nursing unless she loves her job and has exceptional aptitudes for it. Perhaps the most significant sign of the times, an oriflamme in youthful caps, is the increasing determination to do, if possible, work congenial to the worker. If we step briskly out on that road, we may see in the far distance a more general recognition that no stigma attaches itself to any honest work, whatever the nature of that work may be. A domestic servant is as important to the welfare of the community as any other cog on the huge fly wheel of life, entitled to respect and admiration if she does her work well. The same applies to a scavenger.

These visits to our two hospitals have thrilled me. What I have done so often before, the casual sauntering into a ward with a bunch of flowers for a patient known to me, is negligible. One learns so little if one fails, as I have failed, to look beneath the surface. Is it any comfort to find out that others know next to nothing about hospitals? None—rather the contrary. Still, it is a fact that the general reader wants to know more and more about activities outside the circle of his individual interests.

Another justification for my vagabondage

## CHAPTER VI

### TWO HIVES OF INDUSTRY

*Bedminster—Tina—A Portrait Gallery—Spinsters—Fool-proof Machinery—Tobacco and Snuff—Cigars—The Cafeteria—Notes of Interrogation—Dr. Joseph Fry—A Chocolate Age—The Laboratory—Raw Cocoa Beans—Cocoa Butter—The Mélange—The Egg Room—Steel Thimbles—Machinery's Fingers—Chocolate Creams—The Carton Room—Output—The Chocolate Train—Playing Fields.*

#### I

BEFORE adventuring to the Ancient City of Ships, I wandered into my woodland garden, where I found the black-birds and thrushes diligently at work and thousands of daffodils lighting them on their way. The birds—with a sense of direction denied to most of us—are as nice in their selection of material as the equally busy workers in a colossal tobacco factory. Such a pity that birds (and ants) can't answer questions. I should like to have a word with the tits. Why don't they nest in the boxes provided for them? One or two pairs are hovering about them, but, last year, the exasperating little fellows disdained such harbourage, afraid, possibly, of my neighbours' cats. The robins are not so particular.

The contrast between a wood-and-water garden on a lovely spring morning and the factory of Messrs. Wills is

not so salient as might be supposed. Are flowers idlers? Is it true that the lilies of the field neither toil nor spin? I refuse to believe it. Work, hard work, must inform their activities.

When I reached Bedminster, a member of the staff welcomed me, and I had to confess to him that what I did not know about machinery was immeasurable, which raised a smile. What I did know, about three hours later, is still buzzing in my head! This courteous gentleman sent me about my business with a charming young lady who (*figuratively speaking*) took a child by the hand and led that infant into a strange and wonderful world, the whirling planet which might be called—*Nicotina*.

I shall speak of my guide as Tina. As we stepped briskly down a corridor, I said

"Can I light a pipe?"

"Oh, no. Not here."

It is against the rules to smoke in a town of about nine thousand inhabitants, a town stored with enough tobacco to fill a billion pipes! Meekly, I returned my brier to my pocket.

On our way to the Leaf Room, we passed through what I took to be a National Portrait Gallery, kit-cats, for the most part, handsomely framed. These are the presentments of veterans. It was the custom at one time for every retainer of forty years' service to have his portrait painted and hung in this corridor.

"I don't see any portrait of you," I said to Tina.

She laughed gaily, as this mild jest established contact.

"If you pay us another visit, thirty years on," she replied, "you may find ME—on the line!"

## TWO HIVES OF INDUSTRY

Bless her! Where shall I be thirty years on?

Before we left the gallery I learned that nearly all the girls in the factory are spinsters. Sooner or later, presumably, they have to choose between a husband and a job, a very well paid job.

"Sometimes," said Tina slyly, "the boy wins."

If a girl marries and loses her husband she may regain her job. The idea is obvious. An operative of the fair sex cannot serve adequately two masters; but—as Tina admitted—the married men in this huge establishment succeed in doing so.

The Leaf Room smells sweetly. It is full of "tierces," weighing about nine hundred pounds apiece; and there are "Hogsheads" (above that weight) looking (to the infantile eye) like enormous greenery-yallery tubs. I told Tina that I could hardly believe that there was so much tobacco in the world. One man handles a tierce with mechanical aid.

It occurred to me that this was another instance of the triumph of the machine over the man, but, later on, I was astounded to learn that in this factory machinery had not driven men into unemployment. Each year more workers are needed. When I saw the machines, I understood why this was so. The machines, wonderful though they are, cannot be worked automatically.

The operatives can be divided roughly into two classes: those who work with their hands within an inch of the sharp knives and those engaged in clerical work. Tina, when she is not acting as guide, works with her hands; so I asked her if the young ladies in the offices "swanked"? She replied, with a twinkle in her eye:

"Well, all the girls in my department call me Tina,



but if a girl goes out of my department into an office, I address her as 'Miss.' "

Nevertheless, the "Miss" is given a miss when the pair meet on the tennis courts or in the recreation rooms.

There are few casualties, because the machines are almost fool-proof.

I saw the work which is not yet done to any great extent by machinery. The nimblest fingers in the world have to strip the tobacco leaf from its hard central stalk. These leaves, as they come from the tierce, are dry and brittle. They have to be softened by steam before stripping. Then they are cut up: a magical process. Remove the paper from a Woodbine and you will notice how finely cut is the tobacco, and the tiny heap of this tobacco in the palm of your hand is an infinitesimal part of what you see pouring out of the leaf-cutting machines in an Amazonian stream. So tough is the leaf, as it comes from Virginia, that the knives have to be resharpened frequently.

I could not, or I would, describe the machines that make the cigarettes. I had to amend a too hasty conviction that machines are inhuman. These machines have arms and hands and fingers. Each turns out hundreds of cigarettes in one minute. There is, of course, a demand for hand-made cigarettes and hand-made cigars, both much more expensive to make and buy. The essential difference between the machine-made and hand-made article can be felt rather than seen. *The hand-made cigarette (and cigar)* is resilient to the touch; also, to me, it smokes more easily.

Tina saw to it that there was no dawdling. I had to wrench myself away from the groups of girls, interested as I was in them. Despite the roar of the machinery, a roar so distracting that I could hardly hear Tina speak,

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these girls chattered and laughed as gaily as if they were on a "beano." They looked to me happy, healthy, and contented.

"Do they talk politics?" I asked Tina.

"Of course not. Why should they?"

"Do they live in?"

"No."

"Are they fed here?"

"Yes."

"Do they grouse about the food supplied?"

"No; you see, they buy anything they fancy."

This was enlightening.

## 2

Somehow, perhaps because I had heard so much about the perfection of the cigarette-machines, I found myself more interested in the preparation of the "twist" and "plug-cut" tobacco. The "twist" may be fine as string or thick as a cable. It is not sweetened with molasses. Being a taker of snuff, as a sure preventive of colds in the head, I wanted to know about that. The adding of certain oils, spices, and perfumes to the powdered tobacco is a trade secret. Welsh snuff has to be partially toasted in a special furnace; Scotch snuff is ground without toasting. Irish and Welsh snuffs are not scented.

Plug and "bar" tobacco is moulded into flat rectangular bars of varying sizes. In making "twist" the law permits the use of a small quantity of pure olive oil. Hydraulic pressure turns the brown "twist" into a jet-black roll.

In the Packaging Room, smoking tobacco is fed into

another machine which packs it into ounce packets and labels the packet. If placed in air tight tins, the tobacco is preserved for years.

## 3

Tina has a smile which St Michael must have bestowed on her. She pitied my ignorance, but she answered gleefully my questions. I wanted to know if this cut and dried labour became tiresome and jejune. Not to her. Each big department has its own overall, as distinctive as a school tie. Some girls are moved from one department to another, but as a general rule they remain (like trout) in the place where, as novices, they are first put down. Do these departments engage in friendly rivalry on the playing fields? They do not. But the playing-fields are provided, and everything else concerned with their health and welfare. The firm has its own doctor and dentist.

'Is there a beauty parlour?' I asked.

'Not yet.'

'Is there a library?'

'Oh yes, but we haven't time to read much. Most of us would sooner talk.'

So far as I can ascertain there are no skin or other diseases incidental and accidental to this great industry. I never look at that cherished possession, my Old Waterford Glass, without reflecting that the wonderful glaze and colour are due to lead, and that a large percentage of the glass workers, less than a hundred years ago, died prematurely of lead poisoning.

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We soon found ourselves in the cigar department. The famous "Whiffs" and all the cheaper cigars are machine-made. The machines wrap the "filler" in a leaf before it is placed in a mould and pressed. Many cigars are half hand-made, and you can watch the process. A Sumatra leaf is rolled round the machine-made "filler" by skilful fingers working at a speed which Cinquevalli might have envied.

The women engaged in making the best cigars make the "filler" first, snatching up the amount of tobacco needed. This exacts years of practice. In a minute or two you see a dozen cigars all the same weight and size. I said to Tina: "Why don't they roll the cigars on their legs?" Then I had to explain that long ago in the West Indies, a dear old Mammy, black as the ace of spades, had rolled a cigar on her leg, and had handed it to me to smoke there and then. I couldn't answer Tina's question: "Do they do that still in Habana?"

The sorter of cigars is well paid, which puzzled me till Tina said:

"It takes very sharp eye-sight. The cigars are the same size, but there are three colours: red, brown and green."

"Let me turn my back. Pick out three cigars of these colours and let me sort them."

The green cigar was obviously of a greenish tint. The red and brown were almost identical. I happened to guess right, but Tina took the starch out of my conceit when she murmured: "Oh yes, but you took your time over it. Try sorting them quickly." I declined this invitation. The sorter must make no mistakes, and she sorts at lightning speed.

No machine could do this work.

As I write these lines, after luncheon, I am smoking one of these hand made cigars. They smoke easily, they are in perfect condition. A moderately priced cigar in condition is a better smoke than a five-shilling cigar, out of condition. If Dives presents you with the latter be careful to observe two rules. The cigar that is too dry, after lighting, should be held, whilst smoking, with the ash uppermost, otherwise the heat will make it drier. On the other hand, a cigar that is too moist should be held with the ash down, so that the heat can dry it. I was presented with some Embassy cigars. I should not hesitate to offer one to an ambassador. Each cigar is wrapped in thin transparent paper which at first glance I took to be glass. The paper keeps the cigar in condition, even on ship board.

There is more humbug talked about cigars and old brandy than about women. A gallant gentleman ought to lie about women or, shall we say, extol too inordinately their charms. Colonel Newcome was beloved by the ladies of my mother's generation because he exalted the sex. Men, old enough to know better, are too apt to judge cigars and old brandy by the price paid, or (worse) the label. A hand made cigar, made in England out of the best tobacco, may be better than the imported article. Napoleon brandy, bottled more than a hundred years ago, is not so good as a brandy of the seventies kept in cask and bottled recently.

Being an active member of the recently formed (and ever increasing) Wine and Food Society, I spent a quarter

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of an hour in the huge cafeteria, with seating capacity for twenty-four hundred girls and men. There is no mixed eating. The girls sit on the left; the men on the right. Long counters were spread with appetizing food at reasonable prices. As a matter of fact this cafeteria (and the one *chez* Messrs. Fry) is run at a slight loss which is considered by the management an enormous gain if you take into account the service done to the operatives. I am now staring at the bill of fare, which Tina gave me as a souvenir.

The list of comestibles is as long as Wimpole Street.

There are no complaints whatever about the food provided. It is daintily served.

There has never been a strike in this hive of industry.

## 5

I took leave of my sprightly little guide with sincere regret. Later on I had a talk with the lady whose chief care is the interest and welfare of the girls, with the result that I carried away with me what can be machine-pressed into one word—satisfaction. All said and done, the Man still triumphs over the Machine. I have no space to dwell upon how this gigantic industry was built up. It is, to-day, a monument of individual endeavour and initiative. Could it possibly be what it is if it were nationalized? Could the State take an authentic proprietary interest in an industry that exacts indefatigable personal attention? I refuse to believe that it could.

Oddly enough, when I was feeling rather tired after a brisk walk which lasted more than three hours, a question was hurled at me.

"How can the young people stick the monotony of their job?"

Well, well, the man who asked this question has many facets. He might stick his head into a gas-oven, if he took Tina's place in her department. So I evaded one question by putting another:

"How would you like to milk twenty cows a day?"

"I should loathe it."

"Milkmaids don't loathe it. Tina might hate your job. I don't think that these girls are bored."

"Why aren't men employed?"

"Perhaps girls can do the job better——"

"And cheaper?"

"They are helping to keep the pot boiling at home."

"Boys and men should be employed first."

"Ladies first."

We left it at that. These bothering notes of interrogation are in the ambient air where I propose to leave them, because I can't answer them. But I do know from personal experience that monotony of occupation becomes agreeable after a time. I have ploughed all day, and day after day, without feeling bored. The actual work becomes something which pertains to the muscles; the mind is free. The dulllest job I can think of is that of night-watchman in a deserted building. Perhaps he beguiles the wee sma' hours with crossword puzzles?

shire, and entered into business negotiations with one Walter Churchman, a dealer in chocolate and cocoa, a small shopkeeper. Out of this partnership has bloomed and blossomed, during two centuries of executive ability, what might be termed the Big Cocoa Tree of the world, so big that the redwoods of California are insignificant shrubs when compared to it. From this tree comes, every working day, about two and a half million "buds" of chocolate! Imagination reels at the thought of it. Dr. Joseph Fry made it a labour of love to manufacture the finest chocolate. This is no idle statement. The medals awarded to the firm at innumerable exhibitions all over the world are proof that this great pioneer did not labour in vain. Churchman's small shop expanded like Jack's beanstalk, and—who knows?—Jack's beanstalk may have been a cocoa-beanstalk. I make these princes of industry a present of this suggestion in return for the courteous welcome bestowed on me.

There were eight big factories in Bristol before the firm moved to Somerdale, near Keynesham, where one colossal factory—the last word in construction and equipment—stands in its own pastoral domain of some three hundred acres.

Mr. Cecil Fry, the managing director, has lent me some books and pamphlets which tell a wonderful story, the romance of big business, and he gave me a beautifully bound copy of the bi-centenary number of *Fry's Works Magazine*. I quote a few lines from an article by the late Lord Riddell:

We live in a chocolate age. During the last twenty-five years the consumption of that delectable sweetmeat has increased by leaps



and bounds. Apart from its intrinsic merits, chocolate has become the emblem of good will and the ambassador of affection, so that, to use an Americanism, the maxim is, "Say it with chocolate." Any man who takes a lady to the theatre and neglects to give her chocolate may expect the censure implied by black looks.

Long before Cortes conquered Mexico, the Indians had discovered what virtue lay in the cocoa bean, which, by the way, is not of kin to the coco-nut. Linnaeus named it *Theobroma*, the Food of the Gods. It demands tropical heat, moisture, and a rich soil. The plant exhibits fruit and blossom simultaneously—no mean achievement in the vegetable world! The green and yellow pods, about three times as big as a duck's egg, hold the cocoa beans. These, after being removed from the pods, and after a process of fermentation, are shipped in sacks from Africa, Guayaquil, Grenada and Trinidad. When bought by the House of Fry they are landed at Avonmouth and sent on by rail to Somerdale.

## 7

At the lodge gates of Somerdale I was directed to the Administrative Building, passing on my way tennis courts and playing fields which might well be coveted by any famous public school. The placid Avon meanders round three sides of the property.

Mr Fry—the great, great great grandson of Dr Fry—provided me with two guides: his secretary and a retainer of forty years' service. These two kept the bridge with me during three hours, the bridge which spans the almost immeasurable space between my own quiet sedentary life

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and the indescribable activities of six thousand men and women busier even than bees in the making of honey for millions. The secretary, before I set foot on the bridge tickled my humour with a story. The Frys, being devout members of the Society of Friends, never divorced religion from business. Up to the time of the Great War, a simple prayer meeting was held every morning at nine which employees had to attend. An errand-boy, with a letter to deliver, hammered hard upon the door during this sacrosanct period. An old lady, passing by, remarked: "Stop making that noise, you naughty boy! You can't see Mr. Fry, 'cos 'e's singin' 'ymns."

This, I take it, was Mr. Joseph Storrs Fry. I laughed and said: "Tell me another." I culled this: Mr. Joseph Fry was invited to a christening, exercised in his mind as to what present he should give the baby, a prospective godchild. He sought the advice of the staff. One of these gentlemen, blessed with a sense of humour denied to the chief, said: "Well, sir, as the child is a boy perhaps a moustache-cup might be useful." Mr. Fry was not amused. He gazed with portentous solemnity upon the wag; then, inclining to the merciful view that the suggester was not in his right mind, he declared the proceedings closed.

## 8

We began in the splendid laboratory, where the raw beans are tested, even as the sugar-beet is tested. Cocoa-beans are subject to disease. It is most important that only perfect beans should be used in the manufacture of chocolate and cocoa. Apart from this careful testing,

there is the research work dealing with new processes and by products. No part of the bean is wasted. The shells, with their residuum of oil, are used to make cattle food. The director of the laboratory told me that cocoa, as we know it and drink it, was not discovered till 1866.

These raw beans, not unlike large coffee beans, have to be roasted. The small roasting cylinders in Mr. Theobald's Bath coffee house are much the same as the huge cylinders at Somerdale. They revolve under intense heat. A perfectly roasted cocoa bean is of a darker brown than the coffee berry. You see the shells vomited out of the machine. I tasted one of the hot, shelled beans. It was singularly free from sweetness.

Out of this roasted bean must be expressed what is called the "cocoa butter," which looks like butter. And here, to the lay mind, there would seem to be a waste of time and energy, because the butter expressed from the bean is put back into the beans after they have been crushed and powdered.

When we passed into the huge room where the bean is powdered, I was warned to "mind my step." The oil from the bean exudes out of the very air. The brown dust passes through a cloth so compactly woven that, under a microscope, you can detect fourteen thousand threads to the square inch, and settles upon everything! The pavement of the room is slippery, scrub it how you will!

Here you see the cocoa butter and the pulverized cocoa.

The next room is the mixing department for chocolate, where the *mtlange* is made. You see quantines of the cocoa

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butter, huge tubs of snow-white sugar, and the powdered cocoa. The result, after the *mélange*, is a river of liquid chocolate, which has passed beneath granite stones weighing a ton apiece. The cooling process follows.

My guides hurried me into the Confectionery Department, where I saw "creams" before they are covered with chocolate. I tasted three varieties of different colours: white, orange and pale green—all delicious.

Hard by the Confectionery Department is the Egg Room, where every egg is tested. Here the senses of sight and smell prevail over the sense of touch. Nevertheless the percentage of bad eggs, or "Extra French" eggs, is negligible. I forgot to ask how many eggs are used in a day, but I took note of what might well be the slogan of the factory: "Quality and quantity—but quality first." How many eggs can one able-bodied girl break in eight hours? I don't know. Young scullery maids, experts in breaking china, ought to be welcome in this egg room.

Pausing to get my second wind, I asked if the machinery was fool-proof. Some of the girls have to wear steel thimbles. There are very few casualties, whether major or minor, but in old days operatives often suffered from a form of *dermatitis* caused by the cocoa-bean. There is a resident doctor here as at Bedminster, and any skin disease is dealt with promptly and successfully. Machinery is not subject to *dermatitis*. The machine does to-day what the hand did yesterday. When we abuse machinery, let us remember the innumerable hands which were put out of action.

I need hardly add that machines have their ailments, and

their doctor is quick to render first aid I had no time to talk with him, but I saw him—idle for the moment

The mechanical process that captivated me is the coating of the creams with chocolate The machines which perform this miracle are as "human" as the cigarette-making machines in Bedminster. They, too, have hands and fingers Other processes—the making of plain bar chocolate, the tinning of cocoa—are quite as miraculous, but there is not the same appeal to the eye Probably—but this is a shaft of conjecture—a mechanician (or an inventor) would acclaim as most marvellous a time saving device which might escape the untrained eye Till recently the cocoa in thin paper bags had to be deftly slipped into the tins by hand Fingers were not deft enough to do this, the bags were crumpled—and stuck! The machine never fumbles Almost simultaneously, out of piles of paper and sheet tin, appear the little bags and tins the one dancing along in attendance on the other till they are incorporated as one The marriage ceremony is over when the lid of the tin is added and the united pair, decently draped in a wedding garment, are whirled away on a honeymoon to—Everywhere!

I return to the chocolate creams of all sizes and shapes As soon as the "creams" are coated, they slide into a cooling chamber, where light zephyrs toy with them I put my hand near one of the air pipes and it seemed to me that I had plunged it into cold water Instantly my hand was most refreshingly cooled

The final process of wrapping the confectionery in foil and paper suggested a march past of millions of tin soldiers in single file

From cooling to packing takes thirty minutes

### The Carton Room.

This enormous department is piled ceiling high with cartons, as yet undecorated. How many were there? A billion? A million? The lady in charge said, hesitatingly: "I—I don't know; more than half a million."

My brain refused to function as I attempted to compute the number of chocolates which would fill these cartons.

We passed from the Carton Room into a temple of the Arts. Here the cartons are embellished by hand. The most expensive boxes, presented (we may presume) by film-moths to film-stars, are exhibited on a long counter. The box probably costs more than the chocolates destined to fill it. The chocolates are eaten; the box remains, perhaps a precious souvenir of a romantic adventure.

Again I digress. Returning to Bath from Bristol, I essayed a computation. Take fifty machines, working ceaselessly throughout an eight-hour day, turning out eight hundred cigarettes a minute, and find out how many of these cigarettes come from one room in one factory in one day? *Twenty millions.*

And (dealing with 300 working days) the year's output is: *Six thousand millions!*

Glancing at a table of statistics, I am not surprised to discover that the consumption of tobacco in the United Kingdom during the past fifty years is steadily increasing each year.

What is the consumption of chocolate and cocoa?

I don't know.

The best chocolate at Somerdale is sold at five shillings a pound. Perhaps the "twopenny bar" is the most popular.

Time had sped by But my guides insisted on a visit to the railway siding, where I anticipated a final thrill

"Show me," said I, "your famous chocolate train."

A silly request! The chocolate train, surely the most moving "ad" in all the world, is ever on the move It was at Bath not long ago, but, stupidly, I missed the opportunity of seeing it But I saw, in the siding, a freight train, with cars labelled Cardiff, Swansea, Manchester, Birmingham, New Zealand and Australia.

Big Business.

I have had a talk with Clarissa. We agreed, mournfully, that big business was too big for the likes of us, we also agreed that we, in our youth and middle age, had criminally neglected Industrial England May others be wiser and more enterprising!

However, Clarissa, like myself, is keenly interested in persons She opened a crossfire of questions, till I indicted her as a machine-gun She ended on a note personal to herself

"I can now understand why I have difficulty in getting and keeping maid-servants But tell me honestly how you feel about the young girls in these factories So much appears to be done for them They appear to be reasonably well paid, well fed, and well cared for, but they are cogs on a huge machine The hours are long, there must be very

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strict discipline, little noses held tight against the grindstone. Every night 'off' is a tremendous lure. Admit all that."

"We have to admit it."

"Suppose that all factories are run upon progressive and considerate lines, suppose that there is an increasing demand for factory-girls, beginning to earn money when they leave school: will domestic service cease to be?"

Bother Clarissa!

You can't evade her questions. You can't take time to consider them. In and out of print I have inveighed against communal kitchens, but if, in the years ahead, communal kitchens are going to be run as efficiently as the cafeterias of Bedminster and Somerdale, my arguments against them will be rolled in the dust. It is significant—as Tina pointed out—that the girls who bring their nosebags filled by mother, the girls who are brought up to believe that home-made jam is better than, say, the jams of Messrs. Tiptree, generally end up by leaving the nosebags at home. Again, the girls who leave a factory as soon as their work is done, hurrying home, perhaps, to "mind the baby," talk to their fellow-workers who rush off to the playing-fields or recreation rooms. Home, somehow, becomes less sweet, unless they are too tired to play.

I answered Clarissa as best I could.

"You must bait your hook. The old-fashioned 'slavey' has ceased to be. The absurd stigma that attaches itself to domestic service will be wiped out, when all service is recognized as uplifting and a justification of life. A factory-girl may loathe the idea of being a probationer in a hospital, but conditions in hospitals are infinitely better than they were. The feminine instinct for ministration cannot be eradicated. Many girls prefer domestic service to work in a



factory But domestic service must be made more attractive You do keep your maids Why? Because you are considerate to them I repeat—mistresses must bait their hooks "

"I should like to have a talk with Tina," said Clarissa, "but it comes to this Factory girls haven't time to learn to cook, or wash, or keep house Will men want to marry them?"

## CHAPTER VII

### BOOKS AND BINDINGS

Jobber Skald—The Stars Look Down—*Transpontine Methods*—*The Life of Novels*—Good Times and Good Literature—Book-sellers—Tendencies—*A Thriller*—*Is the Novel Doomed?*—*Novels on the Screen*—Contrasts—Coining New Words—England, the Unknown Isle—Cecil Roberts—*A Parson and a Petticoat*—Cedric Chivers—*An Expensive Strike*—How a Strike in San Francisco was Handled—Rebinding old Books—Tooling—Why fine Bindings are so Expensive.

#### I

I HAVE just finished *Jobber Skald*, and feel as bowed and bludgeoned as I did after reading *The Stars Look Down*, both colossal achievements. Dr. Cronin may be surprised to find himself a best-seller. It is significant that there is an immense public to-day curious to read about persons and conditions unfamiliar to them. The pendulum has indeed swung far from Miss Braddon, Miss Corelli and Charles Garvice (who sold "by the ton"). Will it swing back? Probably. Obviously Mr. John Cowper Powys disdains what he might term the meretricious arts of the mere story-teller; he breaks all the rules of technique dear to the Victorians. Indeed *Jobber Skald* is a super-film rather than a novel, spectacular in its panoramic survey and analysis of human nature warped and distorted by the Eumenides. Eros torments young and old alike—

not quite convincingly. The mischievous god may dominate—I don't think he does—Piccadilly Circus. Does he run amok in Plymouth or Weymouth? Obviously again Mr Powys has understudied the Greek Tragedians, Homer, and Thomas Hardy. But he has not neglected the glorious Elizabethans. Like Dr Cronin he constrains the reader to believe what he believes. His characters smoulder into life and then burn with ever increasing vitality and heat. The Jobber is a great creation, so is Jerry, the famous clown. Nevertheless to me the clown's brother, Sylvanus, is the

Open Sesame to the author's mind, a mind suffering from claustrophobia, a mind intolerant of restraint, seeking release from all forms of bondage, a mind at once erotic and æsthetic with something of the homesickness for mud which we find in Verlaine and Baudelaire. I have not as yet read the reviews of this book, but it is certain that it will be acclaimed as a notable contribution to contemporary literature, another departure from the beaten track. Casanova might have writ en some of the love passages, or Colette.

Leaving the particular for the general, these two novels force both readers and writers to consider the tendencies of modern fiction.

For good or ill we have adopted transpontine methods over here. There is, for example, a tendency (sponsored by publishers) to boost immature work. Too much praise is more damning than too faint praise, because expectation in the reader is stimulated without being satisfied. And

nothing, perhaps, fails so disastrously as a failure following a success. A famous publisher told me the other day that he regarded the publication of any novel succeeding a big seller as a gamble likely to involve him in a serious loss, adding with melancholy resignation: "A shaft at random spent may find the target once; it is no sitter that it will do so twice."

This is the moment to touch upon the "life" of novels. Nearly all, like our daffodils, haste away too soon. When I commended *Anthony Adverse* to a niece of Clarissa, she said smartly: "Isn't that a last year's bird's nest?" She may have had in mind a feminine repugnance to a last year's hat! Clarissa laughed when the young lady went on to tell us that she loved to talk of the book of the hour, particularly happy if her friends had not read it. Clarissa, with a twinkle in her eye, mentioned a novel not yet published.

"Have I read that?" asked the niece.

"You can say you have, darling," replied her naughty aunt.

Clarissa, being—alas!—a looker-on at life, loves to discuss all tendencies, and she possesses a mind of many facets. I hate to admit that she is less easily shocked than I am, and more catholic in her tastes. When I told her of my talk with a publisher, she insisted that I should forthwith interview a bookseller and report results. I interviewed three. Possibly the booksellers in Bath reflect and transmit the opinions of leisurely residents in the queen city. It is certain that they commend books to hundreds of readers too indolent to read reviews.

"Do good times," I asked, "make for good literature—and *vice versa*?"

The answer was emphatically "Yes"

One sage declared his conviction that pornographic novels made their noxious appeal after the blood and slime and general beastliness of the war. He, being an elderly man, held no brief for novels he indicted as over sexed. From a younger man, something of a "card," I gleaned the information that under sexed readers wallowed in over sexed fiction.

"Can you," I asked, "recognize at sight an under-sexed customer?"

To my amusement he used the word *stigmata*. These unfortunates, apparently, have weak chins, pale complexions, and furtive eyes. They don't ask boldly for the book they want. They browse about hoping to find it on the counter. But this bookseller takes a slightly malicious pleasure in defeating this browsing, thereby salving possibly his conscience.

'I make 'em ask for it'

"How?"

"They have the obstinacy of weakness. Sooner or later, they murmur the author's name, shying away from the title. I get quite a kick out of their hesitations and evasions. The young men are more bashful than the girls. I used to pretend that they wanted Lawrence of Arabia instead of D. H. But, mind you, they got what they wanted before they left the shop."

This bookseller ought to write a book. Perhaps he will. He spoke of these tendencies as burns trickling into a great loch, making light of them derisively. But he admitted that during the past decade there had been a terrible spate of pessimism inaccurately labelled realism. I agreed with him, so did Clarissa later on. It is so easy

for any novice to collect a hundred horrors that have actually happened in not one but a hundred slums and, after arranging them in sequence, present them as a true picture of slum life. This is not realism, which exacts light to balance shade.

The third bookseller touched upon another tendency leading no-wither. He cursed heartily the novel which has no beginning, no middle, and no end.

"Is it Futurist muck?" he asked. "You are in the air when you read it, you are left in the air when you end it. What is the author at? Tell me."

I made a wild shot.

"Such books are well written, a challenge to the high-brows, who say to each other: 'This fellow must have a hidden meaning; it is up to us to find it.' "

"Give me a good story with cumulative interest."

I think he spoke for the general reader.

There is another tendency which is deplorable. A writer, unable to make a living with his pen in the ordinary way, achieves cheap notoriety by defaming the dead. He is the scavenger of Grub Street and deserves the stocks or the pillory. The law cannot touch these mud-slingers.

Another tendency seems to escape the censure of our critics, although it cannot escape their notice. Books of outstanding interest, widely read, are slovenly written, full of errors in punctuation, grammar, and often spelling. The abuse of the auxiliary verbs is common. On one page of a famous novel, written by a man who to-day reviews novels, I counted the word "was" seventeen times! I can only suppose that this author was too busy answering his "fan mail" to revise his own proofs. My daughter, when I was much below par after a sharp attack of influenza.

brought me a "thriller," saying slyly "I don't think you can read this, but you might try" It was an extravaganza of a dozen murders written by a man with several other thrillers to his credit (or discredit) He introduced me to the Hon Tom Noddy, the son of a baronet, Sir Richard Noddy, spoken of later on as a "baron"! Then we meet Lord Algernon FitzUrse and his wife (not out of the top drawer) who calls herself Lady Diana FitzUrse Later on again, Lord Algernon, whom we take to be the younger son of a duke or a marquess, is spoken of as Lord FitzUrse, a peer Why this absurd and indefensible ignorance about titles? Lord Algernon defies the sacrosanct rule of exclusive clubs by tipping the club waiter! The club, we are told, is situated in Pall Mall, afterwards spoken of as being in The Mall!

Clarissa called my attention to two novels on the table near her sofa In one there was too much scrappy, disjointed dialogue, and in the other a superfluity of dreary narrative, intolerably spun out. It is easy to write dialogue, it is difficult to balance it with narrative Slang is permissible in the former, not in the latter

Clarissa chuckled when I repeated what my bookseller had said about the under sexed Being a precisian, she used the expression "repressed sex." The sexless are, of course, out of court She believes that sex instincts, denied any expression by Mrs Grundy, degenerate into prurience

Is the novel doomed? Well, well, is civilization doomed? The world loves any author who can tell a convincing story even as it loves an Edison or a Marconi If civilization collapsed, I have a vision of Macaulay's New Zealander sitting on a wrecked pier of London Bridge

telling a good yarn to an attentive listener. It is, however, more than likely that the present huge output of fiction may be much diminished when the screen becomes the universal raconteur, when television and colour-photography are perfected, when a miniature cinema is in every cottage. If you talk with one of the film monarchs—not so approachable as real monarchs—he will tell you that his industry is barely out of swaddling clothes. He believes that the novel, not the novelist, is doomed. The novelist will tell his story on the screen to millions with a vividness of presentment difficult to visualize, with such characters, shall we say, as the immortal Mr. Polly and Uncle Jim at grips in the Battle of the Dead Eel! And, if the *History of Mr. Polly* happens to be your favourite novel, you will be able to buy the roll of record, or whatever they call it, and “turn it on” as you sit at ease in your own room. You will belong to a lending library, as you do to-day, and make your weekly list of the newest records. Should this prediction come to pass, there will be, necessarily, a combing-out of novelists. Only the fittest will survive.

Clarissa thinks that this may happen. She said something about the modern novel as contrasted with the novel of fifty years ago. We both saw similarities between the work of Charles Dickens and J. B. Priestley; we found much the same flavour and bouquet in the novels of Jane Austen and Francis Brett Young, but we failed to establish any parallel between Mrs. Humphry Ward and Sinclair Lewis. The novels of my youth were written for the lavender-scented few. It is a big thing, an immense advance, that novels to-day are written for Everyman, that their appeal is universal.



Making my report to my old friend, I raised another question which she dealt with faithfully. I wanted to know why the ordinary man appeared to be more affected by poignant situations in plays and novels than the ordinary woman. I cited an instance never to be forgotten by me. Lord Roberts was Harrow's most honoured guest at a Speech Day long ago. Tears trickled down this great warrior's cheeks when *Forty Years On* was sung. Other men present were as moved as he. But the women—many were present—sat dry-eyed. Why?

Clarissa has a trick of answering one question by posing another.

"Do you think that women are harder hearted than men?"

"I think that women cry over what is intimately personal to them, whereas a man is moved perhaps to tears over the misfortunes of others."

The dear lady pounced on this.

"A man dare not cry in public over his own troubles. Even as a boy he is terrified of being labelled 'cry baby'. A girl has to suppress her emotions in public because she looks a sight if she doesn't. A girl cries herself to sleep over a sad ending to a book, but she doesn't indulge in tears if her face is made up for a party."

One up to Clarissa!

I shall touch on another transpontine tendency polluting the Pierian spring of good English. On one page of a novel written by an Englishman, published in London, I found three verbs *tensed*, *sensed* and *densed*. This turning

of nouns substantive and adjective into verbs turns my stomach. In France—where such matters are better ordered—the immortal forty decide (and never hastily) what words can be added to Littré's dictionary. Our Royal Society of Literature, of which I am proud to be a Fellow, exercises no such authority. Would that it could! Any language, however copious, should admit new words, so often a memorial to famous writers. Who would exclude "gamp" or "Pecksniffian?" But when a hero "tenses" something in the ambient air, I should like to conjugate him out of existence, or decline his further acquaintance.

A word of appreciation is due here to the admirable series of articles in *Punch* by A.P.H. about the absurdity of some of these more recent importations into our language. Hats off to him!

## 4

*Jobber Skald*, perhaps, defies ordinary criticism, soaring above it. It doesn't matter where an author goes, provided he takes his reader with him, but in this astounding epic, where every sentence has significance, the lack of continuity is exasperating. The reader is tempted to skip when the author deliberately abandons one set of characters to set down the misadventures of others. Thackeray did this in *Vanity Fair*. I wonder what the late Professor George Saintsbury would have to say? I never pass his rooms in Royal Crescent without thinking of his magnificent head bending over his desk near the window. He might say: "This writer is above twopenny-ha'penny criticism." Nevertheless he was a stickler for form.

Form in this amazing book is curiously deformed. I had the uncanny feeling that I was being invited to look at dismembered bodies after an autopsy. I felt this before I came to the passages dealing with vivisection. Then I realized that the author had dissected living bodies, autopsy is the wrong word. Clarissa thinks that he might have been more humane in his treatment of the young girls. They are skinned alive ruthlessly.

Another book, published five years ago, stirred up the *wanderlust*. I read Cohen Portheim's *England, the Unknown Isle*, from cover to cover. He reveals the England unknown to foreigners, but he fails to point out that this isle is, for the most part, unknown to its islanders, in spite of the fact that cheap transport since the war has whirled millions out of our cities into the country, millions who return from their vagabondage little wiser than they went, because the king's highway is their one and only way. Folk lore, ancient customs, or any appreciation of a past which has made the present what it is fail to allure them. The countryman, on the other hand, is incapable of "taking in" and assimilating what he finds in a city: its factories and hives of industry. Indeed there would seem to be an almost unbridgeable gulf between town and country not yet spanned by the slogan "Back to the Land."

## 5

Hardly a week passes without my receiving one letter at least from some novice who demands information from a veteran, the "How do you do it?" and the corollary

"How can I learn to do it?" When I showed one of these letters to Clarissa, she chuckled.

"How do you do it?" she asked.

Oddly enough, I had talked about the *ars et cacoethes scribendi* with my friend, Cecil Roberts, who is an enlightened critic and a famous writer of books. We both agreed, I remember, that there is no short-cut to success. As a rule a long apprenticeship must be served. The men who write text-books on the subject are not conspicuous as "sellers," but they do, unquestionably, teach the young idea how to shoot at the mark, although it is almost impossible to teach him how to hit the bull's-eye. They lay stress upon the technique of quill-driving: grammar, punctuation, spelling, and—up to a point—construction. They advocate the use of simple words, the avoidance of cliché, and cumulative tension. Then they find themselves at the end of a cul-de-sac. They cannot impart—imagination, the God-given gift. Nor can they impart style or charm. To the man (or woman) who has served an apprenticeship and who asks "What shall I do with my scripts?" I can commend the *Writer's Own Magazine*. It is full of valuable hints from cover to cover.

How do I do it?

An idea for a short story flits into my mind and may incubate for years. It may burgeon in a few hours. Very rarely are stories from real life (submitted by friends or strangers) anything more than incidental. Usually, they lack the right beginning, or middle, or end. Often the mere fact that they are startlingly true makes them unconvincing. But ideas capable of a twist, redeeming them from the commonplace, are always arresting. Imagination

plays about a captivating title I recall waiting for a parson to make up a foursome at golf. He was late. A wag said 'Where is the petticoat?' Immediately it struck me that 'The Parson and a Petticoat' was a good title for a short story, but I had to find the story. It came to me, suddenly, months afterwards.

I doubt if characterization can be taught. Again, an author's characters have a trick of developing themselves. They may take the bit between their teeth and bolt. Here, other things being fairly equal, the man of wide experience of life has an immense advantage, he restrains his imagination. Dr Cronin could not have written so poignantly about miners, had he never come into intimate contact with them. Writers are asking for trouble—and invariably get it—when they present people of to-day whom they have never met in real life.

## 6

I have wandered through the book binding factory in Bath, of which the late Cedric Chivers, six times mayor of this city, was the founder and proprietor. Much of the work done here is concerned with the stout rebinding of books belonging to Public Libraries, roughly some fifteen thousand a week. The staff numbers four hundred men and women, all, save the prentices, skilled hands. Perhaps—I should like to have more information on the subject—these hands work the harder because, above the ordinary week's wage, they can earn more if they do more. The premises are what they ought to be excellently lighted and ventilated. Most of the work is mechanical,

the endless repetition of the same action performed with incredible swiftness and dexterity. I asked one intelligent girl if she could trust her nimble fingers to do what was needed, and allow her mind to go where it listed. She replied, with a roguish look: "Most of us think of how much we'll get on Friday night." I was a fool to expect a more enlightening answer, but I cannot doubt that the ordinary worker prefers mechanical work more or less independent of the mind. According to engineers and signalmen, the mental attention to their work which must never flag for a moment is a greater strain than any manual work. One man, with whom I exchanged a few words, had worked for two years in a Radstock coal mine, picking away at the coal-face flat on his back unable even to kneel upright. He said, not rancorously: "I'd sooner stick my head in a gas-oven than go back to that mine."

This remark arrested my attention. Here stood a young fellow with a bright intelligent face surmounting a well-muscled body. If he honestly preferred suicide to work in a coal mine, it gave one furiously to think. Was he an exception?

"You like this work?"

"Yes. I'm grateful to find myself here——"

Grateful? As a rule youth is not grateful, because gratitude is a by-product of experience. Age is grateful for small body comforts, such as sound sleep o' nights, decent food, and freedom from ailments. Youth expects so much, and is disappointed when the little extra is not forthcoming. I put an indiscreet question, not overheard by the others.

"Would you go on strike?"

"If I was ordered to down tools——"

Did he know, I wonder, a scrap of inside history told to me previously? The founder of this particular business, an ardent philanthropist, deeply concerned with the welfare of his employees, had left everything to them. In obedience to orders, they downed tools during the Great Strike of 1921. Whereupon the will, bequeathing this valuable property to the workers, was torn up! No comment is needed. I felt tempted to recite a somewhat similar instance that came to my knowledge more than forty years ago. A Southern gentleman of my acquaintance, sadly impoverished by the American Civil War, had left the South and had given his undivided energies and what was left of his fortune to the making of furniture in California. He too was deeply interested in the welfare of his workers. During the nineties, three dry years in succession paralysed industry and drove thousands (including myself) to the wall. I happened to know that this gallant Virginian, during those terrible years of lean kine, ran his business at a loss. His men struck for a higher wage. He invited them to meet him. A friend of his who was present told me that the old gentleman, a septuagenarian, confronted the strikers with a beaming countenance. "You have struck," he said genially, "and by striking you have done me an immense service. I ought to have lowered your good wages two years ago. I hadn't the heart to do it. My books are open to your inspection. You can see for yourselves that for your sake, not mine, I have incurred heavy losses which your action in striking justifies me in cutting. I have long wanted to retire. These works I now declare to be closed. They will not be reopened. Good bye—and good luck!"

Mr. Cedric Chivers left three-quarters of the money invested in this book-binding establishment to the Royal United Hospital, and the remaining quarter to the Free Library.

Not the least interesting part of the work is the rehabilitation of injured books, some, of course, beyond repair. They are given a new lease of life. There are machines with ten spools of thread apiece, which resew backs, turning out 320 copies a day. The edges are coloured by spraying, another captivating, time-saving process.

I was shewn some twenty thousand goat pelts, which come from Nigeria. They are dyed and dressed in Bath. The leather must be made acid-free. From five to six hundred of these pelts are used in a week. One pelt, on an average, binds twenty books. The lettering of the backs was fascinating to watch. A linotype machine supplies the type. Gold leaf is applied, each back is stamped, and the superfluous leaf is rubbed off with rubber, and used again. No waste.

My guide pointed out to me the serrated edges of the knives, which cut more accurately than a straight-edge, a discovery of Cedric Chivers.

Trades Union wages are paid; every novice begins with a small wage. No married women are employed.

Exquisite work is done here by the most skilled hands upon books other than those belonging to the Public Libraries. I gloated over a shrine which held superb specimens of craftsmanship, and when I saw the slow process of tooling and noted the patience and skill of the



craftsman, I realized why fine binding is so expensive. When I was a boy it cost perhaps half a sovereign to bind a book suitable for a school prize at Harrow. To day such a binding in calf or morocco would cost double.

Dull reading, I fear me, but I thoroughly enjoyed this too brief visit. Why, I ask myself with futile regret, have I lived so long in ignorance of the world's more highly specialized work? The old tag, "Half the world has no idea of how the other half lives," is lamentably true. Nevertheless, it is heartening to reflect that the present generation is more curious about what lies without their own circle of petty interests than the generation now passing away. The generation yet unborn may establish contacts undreamed of by our young people.

## CHAPTER VIII

### AN ENGLISH COUNTY IN WALES

*Monmouth—The Wye—Wyndcliffe—Wordsworth—An Unfair Will—Paul Kruger—Raglan Castle—The Marquess of Worcester—Tintern Abbey—What is a “Corgi”?—Chepstow—Henry Martin—Southey—A Curious Well—The Princess Nesta—Paris and Helen—Folk-lore—Renan—Holy Wells—Fairies—Black Magic—Tredegar House—A Lover of Roses—Down a Coal-mine—Badger—Pin-knee—The Miner’s Wife.*

#### I

BLUFF KING HAL wrenched Monmouth from the Lords of the Marches and gave this lovely county to England. It is not so well known as it should be, although many books have been written about it. Baring-Gould loved it, steeping himself in its legendary lore. He must have wandered through it before the coming of the motor-car. If Gaul was divided by Cæsar into three parts, Monmouth can be divided into two: the part made vile by man, and the part, entrancingly beautiful, unspoiled by man. Had I the legs and lungs of thirty years ago, I should explore afoot the untrodden ways of Monmouth, refreshing myself in roadside taverns. A tankard of ale establishes contact with the men, and a snuff-box, holding the mixture beloved by the First Gentleman of Europe, sets a-wagging the tongues of the older women. Welsh folk take snuff. So do I. Snuff is

cheap, but it loses its fragrance and pungency too quickly, the fresher it is, the better

The belief that Taffy is a thief (which he isn't) may have found credence with Englishmen when Monmouth was the ancient kingdom of Gwent, where—so Baring Gould affirms—"all malefactors against the king's laws in England could find refuge," a sort of Alsatia. The king's writ, before Anne Boleyn lost her head, did not run west of Wye

There is no lovelier river than Wye. Perhaps the view from the heights above Tintern, on the road between Tintern and Chepstow, the view from Wyndcliffe which reveals the Wye flowing into Severn's broad estuary, defies description. I saw it a few days ago upon a June evening, when the sun was shining through a golden mist. The silver of Severn had been transmuted into gold, silence brooded upon the hanging woods. At eight in the evening, traffic had ceased, hardly one human habitation was visible. Dryads were hiding behind the trees, oreads may have peered at us.

We were in a Rolls Royce car!

I consoled myself with the reflection that I should have been elsewhere, far away, if the car had not whirled me to this enchanting spot. We were late for dinner, we had to speed on. The pity of it!

We see so much now that we see infinitely less of what really matters. I felt that I was plunging from the sublime to the ridiculous when I glanced at my watch. Wordsworth, in 1798, composed his *Lines on Tintern Abbey* after a few days with his sister. He wrote them down when he reached Bristol. Probably he traversed the road between Tintern and Chepstow and saw what I saw.

## AN ENGLISH COUNTY IN WALES

For I have learned

To look on Nature, not as in the hour  
Of thoughtless youth. . . . Nor wilt thou then forget  
That after many wanderings, many years  
Of absence, these steep woods and lofty cliffs,  
And this green pastoral landscape, were to me  
More dear. . . .

Robert Louis Stevenson, in a passage I can't find, declared that no man could talk about scenery for more than five minutes. Poets can write about it, especially Wordsworth. In my *This Was England* I commended Chaucer to the pilgrim to Glastonbury; let the same man take Wordsworth in his rucksack if he adventures to Usk and Wye.

Oddly enough, the townsman is more vocal than the countryman, possibly because he likes to talk about what is novel and fresh to him. It is a pleasure to meet Americans visiting our West Country for the first time and to take note of what impresses them. Rarely indeed have I heard a gaffer or gammer expatiating upon the beauty of his or her native village. From them one must glean information about persons. What they don't know about everything outside the tiny area of their activities would fill an encyclopædia; what they do know about their own neighbours is astounding and stimulating, a whet to imagination. Why are they portrayed so often as chuckle-headed? I have found ordinary farm labourers disconcertingly shrewd and humorous without being aware of it! A "furriner" can skim the cream of their opinions and judgments, if he holds his own tongue; he imposes silence if he speaks too soon. None the less, discreet silence provokes curiosity and sooner or later the civil question: "Now, zur, what do 'ee think of all this?"

In a Monmouth bar-parlour with a sanded floor, oak settles, a small refectory table, and a good store of strong waters alluringly displayed in glass kegs, I listened to heated talk about an unfair will wherein the testator, intending (as was admitted), to divide what he died possessed of equally between two sons, had defeated his own ends by apportioning to each certain lands. The elder son, who had worked hard with and for his father, inherited land which had diminished in value since the will was made. The younger son, on the other hand, inherited land which had risen in value. Two middle-aged men, friends of the elder son, were of the opinion that the expressed wish of the testator to divide his property equally ought to be carried out, another man, a friend of the younger brother, declared it to be his conviction that the Finger of Providence was plainly manifest. During a pause in the altercation, I asked if the company present had ever heard of Paul Kruger's will? They had not. Oom Paul, with the wisdom of Solomon, dealing also with two sons, left instructions that his property was to be divided at his death by his younger son and that the elder would be allowed first choice of which share he would take. Cheers from the gallery! And then a bagman told us that he had known an aged couple who had agreed to separate after years of bickering. They also agreed to divide their furniture. But each wanted the grandfather-clock. Next morning, coming into the kitchen, the wife saw that her husband had sawn in two, from top to bottom, the ancient time-piece. He greeted his wife with a rancorous grin!

'Now, old 'ooman, ladies fust. Take yer choice, and be damned to 'eel. Which do 'ee want? Marnin' or arternoon?'

Raglan Castle is a magnificent ruin. I revisited it after many years, finding little change. But I saw it again with eyes other than the lightly glancing, non-observant eyes of youth. Would that I could see this lordly pile as it was when Charles the Martyr came here after the battle of Naseby, before it was dismantled by the ruthless Ironsides! So much of it is left that it would be possible to construct a model as perfect as those tiny ships of war made by the French prisoners in Dorchester at the beginning of the last century. Tourists would gladly pay sixpence to see such a model instead of glancing perfunctorily at the ground plan of the castle in the local guide-book. The Society for the Preservation of Ancient Buildings might see to it that such models were made; they would repay the cost of making within a year.

The Raglan guide-book is well written by the Warden of the Castle. The author tells several anecdotes about that great gentleman, the Marquess of Worcester, but he omits one which has significance. When Charles arrived at Raglan, where he was received with all possible state and ceremony, he told his host that he empowered him to exact from the country people such provisions as were necessary for his maintenance. Whereupon Lord Worcester replied:

"I must thank your Majesty, but my castle will not stand long if it leans on the country; I had rather be brought to a morsel of bread than that any morsels of bread should be brought me to entertain your Majesty."

Had the abbots of the monasteries dissolved by Henry VIII exercised a like forbearance, Glastonbury might be

to-day what it was when Richard Whiting ruled over it the most resplendent fane in Christendom

Raglan had a garrison of some eight hundred men when it surrendered to Sir Thomas Fairfax, it held out longer than any other fortress. The gallant and courtly defender, a septuagenarian, game to the last, capable of jesting when a musket ball struck his head, died in Covent Garden four months after he left Raglan, in December, 1646. He was spared the horror of his sovereign's murder in 1649

## 3

Tintern Abbey, upon a midsummer's afternoon, is perhaps even fairer than Melrose when seen by moonlight. The little village was gay with flowers. There are many tea-gardens. The ladies of our party found one overlooking the abbey and river. Here they were handsomely entertained, offered the choice of China or Indian tea, and given, so they told me, good value for their money. Demand has created supply. England will be more merry than it is, when travellers insist upon better luncheons and dinners.

Instead of drinking tea, I wandered through a gate near the Abbey, trespassing unwittingly upon private property, which led to a too brief talk with a farmer who happened to be a stone-mason. He had much to tell me about the faced stones removed from this noble pile to serve as cottage-building material. Both Raglan and Tintern became stone quarries. The lead and timbers from the roof of the former helped to rebuild a Bristol Bridge. Founded as a Cistercian monastery by Walter de Clare in the thirteenth century, Tintern was never rich like Glastonbury.

The Abbot of Tynterne be poorest I understand.

Thus John Russell in his *Book of Nurture*. But the abbots and monks must have loved the winding Wye and its embosomed woods. There is a legend that a monk caught a salmon with a dragonfly—but not surely in tidal waters? Who, by the way, was the first angler who used a fly? At Tintern the fish were netted. Under the strict Cistercian rule were the monks permitted to eat salmon on fast days? Did Welsh rarebit tickle their palates, or the Welsh “goose” which was a bullock’s heart stuffed with sage and onions? Of the ancient *cuisine régionale* I would fain know more. It is certain that haunches of the tall red deer were piously despatched to the Abbey from the Raglan deer-park. There must have been an abundance of flesh, fowl and fish. Did the abbot, a connoisseur of four-year-old Welsh mutton, have a kennel of turnspits?

Supposing that a Welsh “corgi” was of kin to a turnspit, I tried to find corgi in three dictionaries. I drew blank. The name comes from “corr” which means a dwarf, and “ci” a dog. It is not derived from “cur dog.” These good companions have truncated legs, pricked ears, foxy heads, and long bodies.

## 4

Chepstow Castle, another splendid ruin, was built in the twelfth century by the Earl of Hereford. Walter de Clare lived here when he founded Tintern Abbey. It dominates the small town, perched upon a cliff, because the tidal Wye has been known to rise seventy feet above sea level. At Chepstow, Henry Marten, a signer of the death



warrant of Charles I, was imprisoned for twenty years after the Restoration. But he appears to have had a good time, living with his wife and family rent free, dining out, and up to the day of his death steadfastly refusing to drink the King's health. Now Southey, a Bristolian, must have heard of this gentleman, for he wrote as follows

*For thirty years secluded from Mankind,  
Here Marten lingered. Often have these walls  
Echoed his footsteps, as with even tread  
He paced around his prison. Not to him  
Did nature's fair varieties exist.  
He never saw the sun's delightful beams.*

Southey, of course, did not know the facts. Marten's case is worth mentioning as another instance of the Merry Monarch's clemency so surprisingly free from rancour. He pardoned Colonel Blood, who attempted to steal the Crown Jewels in the Tower, and accorded him a pension, because the Colonel disarmed wrath by pleading that what he and his family had lost for the crown justified his trying to annex the crown, which tickled the humour of the monarch.

Ships to this day sail up to Chepstow, barges can ascend the Wye to Hereford.

There was an alien priory of Benedictine monks here, founded soon after the Conquest. Little of this remains, but the present church was part of the chapel. The monuments in the church are interesting.

The Rev William Coxe, writing in 1801, describes a curious phenomenon in natural history—a well, in the garden of a house in Bridge Street, remarkable for the purity of its water, which at high tide becomes perfectly dry! It

subsides before high water and returns after the ebb, not affected by dry or wet weather. The well is thirty-two feet deep and not infrequently contains fourteen feet of water.

The traveller might do worse than stay at Chepstow or in Tintern if he wishes to explore Monmouth. Symonds Yat is within easy distance and the Forest of Dean. Which is the first of a wonderful trinity: the Cheddar Gorge, the Avon Gorge above Clifton's Suspension Bridge, or Symonds Yat? Yat is an obsolete form of "gate"; of Symonds I know nothing. Perhaps he was drowned in this gate of turbulent waters.

A hiker might attempt to traverse the Via Julia from Severn to Caerleon, where Arthur held his court, picking up the Arthurian legends. He will need the best of underpinning if he visits Llanthony Abbey and the remains of the five and twenty fortresses in this county held by the Lords of the Marches.

What a bonanza the principality is to the historical novelist! Baring-Gould must have been tempted to write a long romance about the Princess Nesta, well named by him another Helen of Troy. Miss Marjorie Bowen might consider Nesta as a possible heroine. Here is her story in tabloid form:

She was the lovely daughter of King Rhys ab Tewdrr, seduced by Henry Beaucherk, when under his protection. When Henry became king, he gave her in marriage to Gerald of Windsor, to whom she bore two children. Then Owen ab Cadwgan, the Paris of the epic, at his Eisteddfod in Cardigan, fell madly in love with her. Nesta returned to her castle of Pembroke, built presumably of wood, because Owen, following his ladye love, with his

clansmen, set fire to it. Gerald, the Menelaus, ignominiously saved his life by crawling into a sewer. Paris carried off his Helen, and her two children. Then throughout this wild lovely country there were wigs on every green! King Cadwgan ordered his son to return the lady, he stoutly refused to do so, but—a touch of humour crops out—he did return the children. Civil war raged. Owen fled to Ireland. Finally Gerald killed Owen and Nesta returned to her husband.

I have attempted to find out more about Nesta. The Rev. William Coxe, whose book on Monmouthshire was published in 1801, does not mention her. Was she passionately enamoured of Henry Beauclerk? What were her feelings towards her lawful lord? Apparently all this can be left to the imagination of a twentieth-century novelist. He, or she, could never find a more magnificent setting for such a romance than the part of Wales where Nesta and Owen lived eight hundred years ago. That is little changed.

## 5

I commend a book on Welsh folk lore by Professor Gwynn Jones, published within the past five years. I had to borrow it from the Cardiff Public Library. It happened to interest me greatly because the author knows much of Brittany, where I wandered so happily during twenty successive years. The Welshman is first cousin to the Breton, each can understand the other. The legends of Wales are the legends of Brittany. I have written about the wicked city of Ys, submerged for its sins, like the cities

of the plain, but I did not know till yesterday of a similar legend concerning Cantre'r Gwaelod, defended by dykes and sluices from the sea. The keeper of the sluices, drunk with much wine, left open the sluices. Sixteen noble cities were submerged. It is still believed that when the sea is calm and clear the buildings can be seen. And, as in the case of Ys, the faint tinkling of bells is heard by the fishermen. . . .

The Welsh, like the Bretons, believe in the Ankou, Death's workman; they share also that fierce dread of death which lurks in the Breton heart. The Ankou is the spirit of the last to die in the year, who returns to his parish to seek the dead.

I should like to know—some kind correspondent may enlighten me—if the Welsh lose faith in their legends and traditions when they leave the Principality. What Renan says about Bretons in this connection is worth citing: "*Une fois séparé de son milieu primitif le Breton cessait presque aussitôt de s'appartenir et n'opposait aucune résistance à son absorption dans un milieu étranger. . . . Sa douce foi, son tranquille optimisme est ébranlé.*" My own experience with Welsh servants is that they suffer abominably from homesickness.

Of the many legends concerning the holy wells in Wales, I cull one from this delightful book. A chieftain, Caradog, attempted to debauch a maiden named Winefride, who repulsed his advances. Whereupon he struck off her head. A fountain gushed from the spot where the head fell; the earth opened and swallowed Caradog. But the head was raised and replaced on the body by St. Beuno. Winefride, afterwards canonized, came back to life with the trace of decapitation remaining as a red

thread round her neck. A curse fell upon the descendants of Caradog, who all barked like dogs until they made expiation by visiting the well. According to Professor Gwynn Jones, the water at St Winefride's well is still potent to cure persons suffering from nervous diseases.

He has much to say about fairies. Conan Doyle believed in fairies and gave me a book about them. I pity the modern child who scoffs at the Little People and is bored by fairy tales. The smaller the fairy, the more mischievous. In Wales the midgets ride white or black horses of the size of hares. Hospitality is rewarded with gifts of money. But the gifts are withdrawn if the secret source of them is indiscreetly revealed. They dance round glow worms, they permit a few favoured mortals to listen to their entrancing music. Now and again a fairy female marries a mortal husband on conditions. If he breaks the conditions she leaves him, taking her own cattle and cash.

Black magic is still practised in Wales. It would not surprise me to hear that it is practised in our Mendips. In the Rhondda Valley not long ago a woman bought a sheep's heart and pierced it with needles in order to bewitch a neighbour with whom she had quarrelled.

I am not a credulous person, but the ever increasing mass of testimony dealing with white and black magic is staggering. I can't recall the name of a book lent to me long ago which dealt with evidence supporting "touching" by the sovereign as a cure for scrofula. Queen Anne, I think, was the last of our monarchs to exercise this white magic. No Hanoverian, I understand, practised it.

Hill folk, all over the world, differ from dwellers in the plain. In Cumberland and Westmorland a fellman is

more alert, more silent, and more observant than the man of the valleys. The hill tribes of India are a race apart from the Bengalese. I believe that poetry comes from the hills, prose from the plains; the oreads are more music-loving than the dryads. Why are the Welsh so musical? Nevertheless Robert Herrick was born in London.

I cannot take leave of Monmouth without mentioning Tredegar House, so long the home of the Morgan family, whose pedigree genealogists have traced back to the third son of Noah! Nobody knows how old the oldest part of the house may be. It is an immense pile, not a chapter, but a gigantic tome dealing with the domestic architecture of eight hundred years. It suggests in colour and form Hampton Court Palace. The principal part was added in the reign of Charles II. Stately as is the outside, one is hardly prepared for the magnificence of the interior. Grinling Gibbons must have spent years here. It is a treasure house of pictures, furniture, porcelain, plate, and bronzes. My host showed me a tiny figure exquisitely modelled by Benvenuto Cellini which is the pride of his collection.

## 6

A trivial experience this morning despatched my thoughts into the future, where too often they wander compassless. I found a dear old man staring at the ramblers on my wall. He appeared to be so keen about roses that I invited him to look at my Ophelias and Étoiles de Hollande now in fullest beauty.

"You grow roses?" I asked.

His eyes twinkled.

"Not me It's this way I love lookin' at other folk's flowers, never tire o' that Fur why? I doesn't have to pay for the raisin' of 'em, see?"

I touched my cap to him, seeing plainly enough that this humorous remark impinged upon the future If the "have-nots" triumph, the "haves" inevitably will be despoiled There will be no private ownership of costly possessions It is possible that the general public fifty years hence, more alive to beauty in any form than it is to-day, will enjoy possessions held in their name by the State A curator in the Bristol Museum confirms this conjecture He assured me that the visitors to his galleries were steadily increasing in numbers, and he said "Bank-holiday trippers are beginning to realize that these treasures belong to them" Gilbert Chesterton could treat faithfully this paradoxical shifting of the sense of possession from the individual to the crowd

A kinsman, however, contends that the ordinary man in the street is not very interested in pictures, but he qualified this statement by adding that he became interested when he began to realize what the nation had paid for some of them He cited this personal experience he was wandering about the National Gallery, when he saw a bunch of visitors chattering to each other, but taking no notice whatever of the masterpieces on the walls He addressed one big jolly fellow

"Why are you here?"

"Ah h h—we come in to get out o' the rain, see?"

"You aren't Londoners?"

"We come up to see the Coop"

"What coop?"

## AN ENGLISH COUNTY IN WALES

"*The Coop*—Sheffield Wednesday and Tottenham Hotspur."

"Quite. Now that you are here, let me show you one or two of the treasures."

He showed them Raphael's *Ansidei Madonna*.

"That cost us £76,000."

The man gasped. He went on gasping when he was told that £123,000 had been given for the Cornaro Family, by Titian. He and his friends were enthralled when they learned that Rubens had painted out a straw hat, substituting black felt headgear after his model died. They eyed appraisingly the portrait of Charles I, bought at the Blenheim Sale for £17,500; they stared at the "sample" of what Vandyck could do when he captured the king's interest and attention. It stopped raining, but the party were loth to leave the gallery; and, when they did go, promised to come again. Anecdote had beguiled them. It is obvious to me that this is the right bait. According to my kinsman, he had quickened in these football "fans" the sense of possession. They took leave of him convinced that the treasures belonged to them.

Our roses, this summer, have surprised me. They refused to blow for the first three weeks of June. The hot weather presaged violent thunderstorms, so they wisely waited till these were over. Now, on the third of July, they are a sight to behold, a braver show than we have had for years.

Any able-bodied visitor to South Wales should go down a coal-mine. I am aware that such counsel from me may provoke a smile from fellow-travellers who know that my fancy, throughout a long life, has dwelt upon fields that the Lord has blessed, pastures green, glades in Arcadia,



upland moors when the heather is in bloom, quiet streams, lonely hills and peaceful valleys. Whether we ought to seek the peace which is past the understanding of so many is another question which I am unprepared to answer. Few would describe a huge factory as a field of human endeavour blessed by the Lord. Now, after visiting half a dozen, I am constrained to believe that graces and benedictions may be found where we least expect to find them.

Of all our possessions, coal, perhaps, is the most outstanding, a fact difficult of assimilation by those who seldom see it except in scuttles. The romance of coal might engage the attention of Mr H G Wells and his staff of learned clerks. Who would have believed that from coal would issue all the colours and iridescence of the rainbow?

Black diamonds!

Behold a miracle when a lump of coal, touched by the magic fingers of science, is transmuted into gas!

A shepherd would see little difference in coal mines, even as a miner would be put to it to distinguish one sheep from another. Here, in Somerset, the coal mines at Radstock, for example, have not as yet ravaged the face of the landscape. It is otherwise in South Wales, where the abomination of desolation brings a lump into any sensitive throat. It is not the hard work of our miners which is so pitiable, but the lack of work and the conditions under which, willy nilly, they have to live.

I did not go down a South Wales coal mine, because I was pressed for time. I chose instead a mine within a few miles of Bath. The manager accompanied me. I wore

my oldest clothes and hob-nailed boots. At the pithead we were provided with lanterns, "naked" lights in this case. Gripping my unlighted lantern, I stepped into the cage, followed by the manager. There was no lively lift-boy to beguile the descent. Just as well! The door of the cage was banged, and we plunged into Cimmerian darkness. The cage is operated from above and below. The lanterns are not lighted because the swiftness of the descent would extinguish them. I am glad that the manager could not see my face. It seemed to me that I was falling down a well at incredible speed in obedience to the laws of gravitation. The pace robbed me of breath and speech. Half-way down, some three hundred yards from the top, we passed another cage ascending. Nearing the bottom we slowed up, thank God!

A man opened the door of the cage, and I reeled out to find myself upon the horse road, firm and dry beneath my boots. Oil-lamps were fixed on the walls. Hard by were the stables. In this mine four horses, or rather ponies, suffice to do the work. I could see the truck-lines about a yard apart. The horse-road was narrow, so narrow that there are manholes about ten yards apart in which we stood when a truck passed. I rubbed the nose of one of the ponies; he was well groomed and well nourished, poor little blind exile from the light of day, and seemed content with his lot. The miners make pets of them, giving them sugar and other "hand-outs"; but—alas—they remain during their working lives six hundred yards below the green hills of Somerset. Why aren't the trucks worked by machinery?

We walked along a level road, able to stand upright, for nearly half a mile, till we reached the end of the horse

road beyond which no quadruped travels. Here we began to ascend a steep slope technically called a "gug." We had to bend our heads as we toiled upwards. After three hundred yards had been traversed I had to sit down to recover my breath. Whether or not I was becoming more accustomed to it, the air seemed less piercingly cold and fresher than I expected. The manager told a story new to me. Two miners, friends on earth, died. One ascended, the other went below. By some special grace, they were allowed to meet. The man from the high places complained "It's not Heaven to me, old fellow, I have to work harder than I did on earth—for others, a twelve-hour day—six to six." The man from Hades observed cheerfully "Conditions with me are easier than I looked for. I put in one hour of work." The other expressed astonishment. "Only one hour," he repeated. "Can you explain this?" "Oh yes, think of the size of our staff."

Whilst I was resting, trucks passed, empty and full, on a siding. On we went till we reached the top of the "gug" about a quarter of a mile away. Here we had a word with a man in control of the trucks, who regulates the traffic. I examined the steel cable wound upon a drum about three feet in diameter. My figures and distances, such as they are, must be accepted not too captiously. I couldn't see anything or anybody very distinctly. Beyond the drum I espied a squat electrical engine.

From this halting-place we began to descend what is called a "dipple" with the same single track of rails. I reckoned that we walked at least five hundred yards, unable to walk upright, till we came to a sort of chamber

where men were at work, but not on the "coal face." These men were busy with the trucks whether empty or full. Passages, like burrows, confronted me. We entered one, not much higher than a truck, and walked another quarter of a mile. At the end of this burrow we found three men and a boy. Two of the men were picking out the coal. Miners work in pairs. These men had candles stuck in their caps, because a candle flickers out at once if the air is bad. The third man and the boy carried in their caps lanterns smaller than bicycle lamps. The boy was in charge of a sled, which is called a "putt." When the miners pick the coal from the coal face, the boy places it in his "putt." The man takes the coal from the putt and loads up the truck. Both he and the boy, if the miners are on "piece work," have little leisure. The boy may be munching his "bait" the while he is filling his putt with his disengaged hand. The boy I saw was eating cheese, so he told me, but he said, quite cheerfully, that the mice had been at it. Mice infest mines.

It is impossible to say how much coal can be picked out in one day by two skilled miners. The amount varies from two to ten tons, according to conditions. In this mine the men work from six a.m. till two p.m.

A miner may be terribly badgered by what he calls "badger," the strata of stone and stones which he has to deal with before he can pick out the coal. In this mine you can't have coal without "badger."

The men work on their backs or on their sides, unable to kneel. At intervals they have to prop up the roof with wooden posts about five inches in diameter. If the roof is "soft" and crumbly, a man, careless about the right placing of the posts, may be buried alive. The posts I saw

were about six feet apart. The technical word for what a layman would call the ceiling of these passages is "head."

When a miner is off duty, he squats, like a cowboy, resting his buttocks on his heels and his elbows on his knees. The two men at work on this coal face were naked to the waist. The manager told me that a self-respecting miner never wears a collar or necktie except on Sundays or when he goes a-courting.

If a miner suffers from indigestion, he sucks a bit of coal. He dreads "pin knee," what we call "housemaid's knee," a most bothering affliction, which may keep an otherwise strong, healthy man out of work for several weeks.

I was shewn a "bell mole" (I cannot vouch for the right spelling), a sort of pyramidal stone which now and again falls out of the "head" unawares, inflicting serious injuries.

I rejoiced to find myself on turf again. But I'm glad that I have been down a coal mine.

If a miner works for three days in the week, he can draw the dole, if he works for four days he cannot. The older men recall what they earned during the war—and spent. Probably another war would be welcome to them. I feel sorrier for the women and children in such places as Tonypany. When a miner returns home, his dinner must be ready for him. After dinner he takes a snooze. The daily bath follows. The wife washes her husband's back. Nearly every night she has to repair his trousers, she has to rise with him long before cockcrow, get ready his breakfast and the 'bait' he takes with him, and speed him on his way if he happens to be sluggishly inclined.

Then she goes back to bed for a couple of hours, till it is time to get the children ready for school. On washing days she does not go back to bed.

Miners never love or even like their work. How could they? Nevertheless they are cheerful and always ready to talk about sport. Some do a bit of quiet poaching. They all know that they carry their lives in their hands when they enter the "cage."

I have culled from a *Gazetteer*, dated 1751, a remarkable law or custom among the miners of the Mendip hills which used to be called "Burning the Hill." Miners living at a distance from the pits left their tools and the coal upon the open hills or in a hut. Whoever was convicted of stealing these was thus punished: He was shut up in one of their huts, with dry furze and fern piled round it; the hut was set on fire; the thief, with his hands and legs at liberty, was allowed to break out of the burning hut and run away, but from that moment he became an outcast and was not permitted to return to his work or to seek other work in the neighbourhood.

A Radstock miner has lent me a book entitled *Coal Pits and Pitmen*, by R. Belson Boyd, published in 1892. What miners suffered prior to 1842, when the late Lord Shaftesbury introduced his famous Bill, prohibiting the employment of women and young children in coal mines, is incredible. Tiny children had to drag coal-tubs along passages not more than two feet high! These innocents—so a school-teacher testified—came out of the pits with "hellish dispositions"—and no wonder! An M.P. of those days had the impudence to affirm that the occupation of a collier was generally considered a "remarkably pleasant and cheerful employment." Many owners of

collieries violently opposed Lord Shaftesbury's Bill. But public opinion was too much for them. The Augean stables were partially cleansed. Then, as indeed now, the general public were in ignorance of what went on underground and out of sight. . . .

I repeat: men engaged in dangerous and hateful occupations ought to be paid higher wages.

## CHAPTER IX

### DOGGY DIGRESSION

*Turnspits—John Wood's Account of Them—Jesse—A Broadsheet—Folk-lore—Gelert—Church-going Dogs—A brief Dissertation on Cats.*

#### I

CLARISSA, who expressed interest in corgis (having never seen one), has insisted that I should write something about the turnspits of Bath. I had supposed in my ignorance that turnspits were English dachshunds. Nothing of the sort. An aristocratic dachshund, so Clarissa says, would repudiate such kinsmanship. He would scorn to turn a spit; he draws badgers; he is a sportsman, not a scullion.

Well, well, in an age when utilities are paramount, and the Roast Beef of Old England is baked, I find a warm corner in my heart for these humble little turnspits, who, like our miners, had no love for their job and were cunning as foxes in playing truant from it. If they espied the cook with a joint in her hands, forthwith they hid themselves. John Wood's *Description of Bath*, published in 1765, has a passage worth quoting:

The animals thus employed have not only exceeding long backs, but short bandy legs; and some of them are naturally so idle, that, to avoid their work, they will sneak into the most obscure Holes and



Corners, where they will lie perdue for Hours, without suffering themselves to be decoyed from their Lurking Places by any Stratagem whatsoever Of these ugly, deformed, lazy Animals, the City is now blessed with about three thousand in Number by some computations, but by other reckonings with many more, and I have been well informed that one of our wealthier Townsmen is at this Day so fond of Turnspit Dogs, that he keeps no less than eight or ten of them for his Amusement!

The Turnspit Dogs of Bath are remarkable as well for their daily assembling together in one Part of the City or another, as for their extraordinary actions at those meetings Actions which seem to indicate something between them more than a bare Assembly, and they are such as commonly draw on them Persecution from the Chairmen with a Vengeance, as though those robust People were determined to fright the little Animals out of the superior Understanding they appear to be endowed with.

Edward Jesse caps this delightfully The Bath turnspits, it seems, attended divine service in the Abbey On hearing the word 'spit," which occurred in the lesson for the day, they all ran out of church in the greatest hurry, associating the word with the task they had to perform, unaware that it was spittle

I have just read a broadsheet which I found in the Public Library It has amused me so much that I make no apology for printing it in full It is undated, but appears to have been published about 1784

A Full and True ACCOUNT of a most Dreadful, Horrid, and Unbloody MASSACRE, which was committed, and done, on the Tenth Day of *August* last that ever was, in the City of *BATH*, in the County of *Somersetshire* on the Bodies of several Hundreds of the Inhabitants of the said City Together with a full and particular Description of the unspeakable Calamities of most of the Families of the Town by this unheard-of Barbarity Also Mrs T C.'s Lamentation, &c., &c.

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Divers Persons, some of them too great for us to name, having been informed by ill-disposed People, that the Doctors and Apothecaries of *Bath* had entered into a Combination with the Lodging-Houses, and had, Time out of Mind, abetted and encouraged the said Lodging-Houses to keep an incredible Number of Dogs, under the Pretence of turning their Spits; which said Dogs did, and do, Nightly, and every Night, particularly when the Moon shines brightest, assemble together in great Companies, in the most noted Parts of the Town, and do then and there fight, bark, and howl, to the great Disturbance, and Annoyance of the Sick; by which Means the said Physicians and Apothecaries were, and are, often called the next Morning to the said poor suffering sick Persons, who have passed bad Nights by this Disturbance, and did, and do, reap much inhuman Gain to themselves thereby. Now these said Persons, as it is believed, having been thus informed, and fancying, from their own woful Experience, that the said Information was true, did, without having any Fear of the Devil before their Eyes, conspire, contrive, and actually execute, the Murder and Destruction of the said poor innocent Animals, in the Manner and Form following, *to wit*—

Of all Days in the Year, the Tenth of *August* was the Day appointed by these vile Conspirators for putting their horrid Plot in Execution. On that Day—that fatal Day!—is held the famous Fair on *Lansdown*, a delicious Plain on the Top of one of those Hills, which seem to have been planted by Nature round her favourite Spot, to defend it from Wind and Weather. On it a fair Monument informs the Traveller, how many valiant *Cornishmen* were one Day slaughtered on its Borders. But, alas! what was that Day to the woful one I am now about to describe! No more than a Mole-hill is to *Lansdown* itself. To this Fair all the politest Gentry resort, but more especially all Cooks, Kitchen-Maids, and Scullions, who flock thither in Drove, puffing up the Hill, dripping all the way their melting Grease, natural and acquired, quaffing imaginary Pots of Ale, tempered with a little Gin, which they are sure to meet with at the End of their Journey. The Kitchens at home are all left unpeopled, unguarded by any body but the trusty Turnspits; They, poor Creatures, indulge, on this great Holiday, in undisturbed Repose, or play their merry Tricks in the lowest Regions uncontrouled.

When lo! (my Heart is as cold as a Stone to tell it) twenty black Monsters, all Natives of the Forges of *Brunnigham*, who had artfully hid themselves in different Corners of the Town to conceal their murderous Intentions, all armed with Jack Lines, started at once from their Holes, and entering the unguarded Kitchens unquestioned, in three Hours' Time, assisted secretly by their God, *Vulcan*, they hanged, and destroyed no less than Three hundred Turnspits, tucking them round their own Wheels, like Rats adorning the Girdles of those honourable Gentlemen, whose Profession it is to destroy such Vermin. Alas! alas! what *Hussar*, or what *Pandour*, could abstain from Tears, and see the Grief! the dismal Distress the poor Ladies were in at their Return. Surely, surely, if the good *Things of the Fair* had not wonderfully supported them, many had put a hasty End to their Sorrows with the same Cords which had proved so fatal to their dear Companions, and Fellowlabourers, in the important Business of Roasting. But when the Surprise and Shock of so dismal a Spectacle had turned their very Livers and Lights within them, and they had regained their Spirits by disgorging their Cakes and Ale, what Passion! what Fury did not succeed! They wielded the Chopping knives, the Spits, and the Pokers, with as much awful strength as *Guy of Warwick* did the Truncheon, or (as some Authors have it) his Fist, with which he slew the Dun Cow. They ran into the Streets, all frantick as Bitches bereaved of their Whelps, crying out in a tremendous Manner,—*Where are the Villains! where are the Murderers! Bring any one of them to us, we will this Moment cut him into Collops, mince him, fry him, and broil every Bone in his Skin.*—But the Murderers were flown. The sturdy *Amazons* were forced to retire without Revenge, and to comfort their poor Hearts, and allay their Sorrows with c'other Quartern, and so to Bed.

The following note concludes the broadsheet:

A Jack is a mark of a Man's being Master of the Family, as a turnspit is of the good woman's ruling the Roast, and the Man's being lower than the Turnspit himself. Such men are called Jills.

One digression breeds another. When did the Pekinese adventure hither? I have just seen *David Copperfield* on the screen. Not the least of the actors "featured" is Jip, Dora's lapdog, who, unless my eyes have deceived me, is a Pekinese. Jesse, whose *Anecdotes* were published in 1858, does not mention these Chinese aristocrats! Again, unless my ears played me false (as is quite likely), I caught the transpontine word "Okay." Are these anachronisms permissible? Obviously they (and others like them) have turned Mr. St. John Ervine's stomach, but in the case just cited they seem to have escaped the attention of Mr. Hugh Walpole, who, I understand, held a watching brief.

Clarissa wants to know why the modern dog suffers from hysteria. A wire-haired terrier, belonging to my daughter, a sprig of quality entitled to blazon sixteen quarterings, is at this moment under treatment for this passing (I hope) indisposition. Under my nose, without any provocation, he burst figuratively into tears and laughter: heart-breaking wailings punctuated by reassuring yappings! We had to send for the vet., who administered an opiate. Twenty-four hours later the patient had recovered his normal serenity of temper. "Too much in-breeding," remarked his medical attendant. Jesse has nothing to say about such attacks; presumably they were unknown in his day.

The original Jip (in the novel) accompanied the child-wife to the Farther Shore. Dickens must have known of similar instances in real life. Clarissa conjectures that the legend of Gelert, enshrined in verse, and committed to

memory by youthful Victorians, had much to do with the kinder treatment of dogs in our kingdom. The howling of a dog outside a house is looked upon in Wales (and elsewhere) as a sign of death in the house. The faithful dog bears the Indian company to happier hunting grounds. It is certain that even in Dickens' day, in our remote rural districts, certain abominations were practised. Mr Udall mentions a Dorset recipe for a cool hand in butter making "Take a young dog, cut it open, and put your hand and arm inside whilst the animal is still warm."

Lean says that if a strange dog follows you home and insists upon staying at your house it presages wealth. The Dutch have it that a happy marriage is assured if a strange dog follows a courting couple. Then perhaps they adopt the dog, teach him to draw a cart, and allow him to precede them when they sit in the cart on the way to market. In the Highlands it is ill luck indeed if a dog comes between bride and groom when they are being married. I have seen dogs in church in Sutherland, lying at the feet of shepherds and behaving better than laddies and lassies sucking peppermints. I had a golden cocker-spaniel who loved the weddings at our small church—and not only weddings. The parson addressed me

"You were not in church last Good Friday——"

I wondered if he was about to admonish me

"No," I replied, "I wasn't"

"Your dog was"

In Bulgaria, on Ash Wednesday, dogs are soundly beaten to prevent their going mad during the ensuing year.

When *This Was England* was published, at least a dozen correspondents sent me dog stories. The best was this. A man took his dog to stay at a country house about

## DOGGY DIGRESSION

a hundred miles away. *The pair travelled by train.* On arrival, the dog was not too hospitably welcomed. To his disgust he was given a loose-box in the stable. He got out of it that night and found his way back to his own home over roads never traversed before by him. Some story!

The saying, "Nothing so long of memory as a dog," might be said of a horse. I know by my own experience that a hunter never forgets an obstacle where he has come to grief. He cocks his ears and shortens his stride. As a boy I was warned by a veteran of the chase: "Never ride your horse at a fence where you have taken a bad toss on the farther side." This admonition does not apply to a post-and-rails which the horse can see. If he blunders at that, make him jump it again there and then; he won't top it twice.

In Wales children are warned not to do certain things upon pain of coming into the world again as a dog! another indication that dogs had a dog's bad time not so long ago. Mr. Gwynn Jones tells a dog ghost-story: what were reputed to be "demons," or familiar spirits, would assume the form of a mastiff. He adds that it was deemed lethal to speak of such visitations; if you failed to hold your tongue, you died! In Scotland, until recently, if a dog entered the room where a corpse was laid out, it was held to be so ominous of ill-fortune that the luckless animal was instantly killed.

To those who, like myself, have lost too active dogs done to death by motor-cars, dogs that must be exercised daily, the acquisition of a bull-dog puppy may be commended. A bull-dog can get his exercise in quite a small garden; he is also a terror to tramps and burglars. More,

they are "comics", they keep a household laughing. If you keep a household laughing, you keep it happy. Why did our kings of yore keep jesters? For the same reason. Bull-dogs are not delicate. They are consistently faithful, affectionate, and devoted to "Master." They are the bravest of the brave. Jesse tells a dreadful story of a brutal owner who laid a wager ' that he would at four distinct intervals deprive his dog of one of its feet by amputation, and that after every amputation he should still attack the bull with his previous ferocity, and that lastly he should continue to do so upon his stumps. "

This fiend won his wager!

I am told that the skull of a bull dog has been found near the skeleton of a Neolithic man in the Kent Cavern at Torquay. I have not been able to verify this. I read somewhere that £3,000 had been paid for a champion bull dog which went to America.

Clarissa suggests that I might say a few words about cats. Folk lore is not too kind to them. Pussy, so some say, never climbs the golden stairs. When she dies she goes to hell, where her claws are removed. Unlike a dog, if a strange cat comes to a house, it presages poverty. A bride will be happy if she hears a cat sneeze on the eve of her wedding. The French say that no young girl can expect to be married within the year if she treads on a cat's tail. No cat should be allowed to come near a baby, because it sucks away the infant's breath. It is lucky to have a black cat in a theatre, two black cats on board ship cause ship-wreck.

I shall end this too long digression with a capital anecdote culled from Hone, who says slyly that it must be true because it was published in *The Scotsman* on the 23rd of October, 1819.

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Once upon a time a cat, belonging to a shipmaster, was left on shore by accident when his vessel sailed from the harbour of Aberdeen, Fifeshire. The vessel was absent about a month, and, on her return, to the astonishment of the shipmaster, puss came aboard with a fine kitten in her mouth, apparently about three weeks old, and went down to the cabin. Two other kittens were afterwards caught, quite wild, in a neighbouring wood, where she must have remained with them till the return of the vessel. The shipmaster (hard-hearted man!) did not allow her to go ashore again, otherwise it is probable that she would have brought to him the whole litter. What is more remarkable, vessels were daily entering or leaving the harbour, none of which she thought of visiting till the one she had left returned.

Again—some story!

I am tempted to cap it with a personal experience. We had here an accomplished mouser, a young cat who had never, so far as my brother and I knew, killed a rat. She killed an enormous rat and proudly brought it to our butler, a man who stroked cats and loved them. I went into the pantry, and saw the rat on the floor. When I praised the cat, she purred. After this, whenever the cat killed a rat, she brought it to the pantry to receive our congratulations.



## CHAPTER X

### ISLE OF THE SAINTS

*Caldey—The King of Caldey—The Queen—Rare Birds—Misadventure—Fuchsiar—The Trappists—The Ogam Stone—St. Samson—Miracles—Benedictines—The Rev William Done Bushell—Lord Halifax—The Monastery—The Church of St. David—The Priory—Ghosts—A Disaster—St. Stephen Harding—A Time-table—The Pot of Basil—Caves—The Calvary*

#### I

CALDEY ISLAND, situate two miles from Tenby at the western end of Carmarthen Bay, is under certain conditions of wind and tide inaccessible. Had Hero lived on Caldey, Leander would have been constrained to visit her intermittently. Even upon a summer's day, when that *dulce monstrum*, the sea, looks like a sheet of shot silk or mother of pearl, there are underlying currents which would whirl the stoutest swimmer far from his course. A land lubber can understand this if his eye lingers upon the stretch of sand and rocks between Caldey and the neighbouring islet of St. Margaret's. He will see a line of white, where the combers, with the mighty force of the Atlantic behind them, break into foam at a moment when children are safe enough in small boats in Tenby harbour. Ten minutes suffice to make the passage impassable.

The king of Caldey is the Prior of a Cistercian order of

## ISLE OF THE SAINTS

Trappists; the queen—who does not dispute his supremacy—is a lady who entertained me delightfully for a few too brief days. Quite frankly, I have been bewitched either by her or by the island.

The monks have a hostel, or guest-house; residents can receive their friends. Trippers must leave the island not later than six p.m. Young ladies in shorts are not permitted to land. Upon one occasion, so I'm told, the services of a monk were requisitioned to help carry ashore a bevy of giggling school-girls. He fled from temptation and besought his Prior to send an older man!

Roughly speaking, there are thirty monks in the monastery and as many other islanders. There is no doctor, no school-teacher, no nurse, no bothering inspector, and only one shop. The island has been cut off from communication with the mainland for as long a period as three weeks. I lay stress upon this, because it accounts for the fact that this island of saints is hardly known, save by name, to the general public. Nevertheless, it excites interest in the archæologist and all lovers of natural history, at its best in Spring, when it blazes with colour.

*It is hardly possible to approach the cliffs near Sand Top Bay without treading on the nests of the gannets. I have before me, as I write, a snap-shot of one of the children of my hostess who is playing with a gannet fledgling. If, in the breeding season, a bird flies from its nest, it is viciously pecked by its neighbours unless it alights on its own nest. If a human trespasser approaches a nest, the gannet is violently sick and human nostrils are virulently assailed. There are nearly as many rare birds on Caldey as on the Dream Island, off St. David's, where Mr. Lockley has established his bird sanctuary. Among the rarer birds*

are peregrines, kestrels, night-jars, ravens and Mother Carey's chickens Parrot-beaked puffins nest in burrows, driving out the bunnies

After embarking at Tenby, I was warned by the skipper of the small motor-boat that I might arrive in Caldey "a dem'd moist unpleasant body," if I did not wear my mackintosh The wind and the waves were rising Had we waited another quarter of an hour, I might have been put to it to find a lodging in Tenby in mid-August. Five minutes later, as we cleared the little bay, a big wave broke over the boat, the first, not the last, to do so. We carried no sail and only one oar More than half way across the engine stopped! We began to drift towards the island where we might have been wrecked on the rocks I saw a man disengaging a small anchor Our skipper, inspired by the faith that moves mountains, attacked the recalcitrant engine with a hammer. To the relief of a young lady-passenger, who by this time was hovering on the edge of hysterics, the engine began to grunt disapproval of such punishment Then it purred—and all was well But the landing on Caldey was none too easy, as the boat rose and fell beside the tiny jetty I felt that the saints were not welcoming me too courteously. I am, however, assured that visitors to this holy islet enjoy special graces and benedictions if they land at the jetty on their knees

On the jetty I saw a lay brother, a jolly fellow Was he there to raise a menacing finger if a girl in shorts happened to be with us? He bestowed a reassuring smile on me, and helped us to disembark. A moment later, the boat was on its way back to Tenby No boat can pass the night with impunity in any bay or cove on Caldey.

Approaching the bungalow belonging to my hostess,

## ISLE OF THE SAINTS.

I passed through an avenue of magnificent fuchsias, which bloom from April to the end of October.

Before dinner, I visited the lighthouse, whose intermittent lights are manipulated from the mainland. I passed through a field of fine oats. Evidently these Trappists, self-supporting, are excellent farmers, farming some four hundred acres of arable and pasture land. They supply the islanders with butter, eggs, cream, milk, and bread. By the rigid rules of their order they do not eat flesh, fish, or fowl. They are allowed small ale, if they brew it themselves. They do not brew it. They drink tea, coffee, and water. They do not drink cocoa or chocolate.

They work very hard, and they pray (for others) unceasingly. After dinner, my hostess told me much which must be set down, a story which left me agape.

### 2

About the year 500 A.D., Celtic monks came to Caldey from St. Illtyd's Abbey at Llanwit Magor in Glamorgan. In the old Priory Church is an Ogam Stone, the only relic of that period which is left, with an inscription deciphered by Sir John Rhys "Magi Dubr," the servant of Dubrisius, whom Tennyson styles "Dubric, the High Saint." Dubric, so runs a legend, was Archbishop of Caerleon in King Arthur's day. This Ogam Stone, to archæologists, is the most interesting object in the Isle of Saints. Mr. Bushell writes as follows: "It is a block of sandstone with an incised cross, a Latin inscription below it, and an Ogam inscription round the edge; there is also a cross on the back,

and a small cross on either edge The Latin inscription is in debased Roman lettering" Sir John Rhys translates the Latin thus

And I have provided it with a cross, I ask all who walk in this place to pray for the soul of Cadwgan

However, Professor Burkitt translates the first part of the inscription as

With the sign of the Cross of Jesus, I, Iltyd, have fashioned (this monument)

Mr Bushell goes on to say that the stone was dug up in the ruins of the Priory many years ago, and it appears to have been used as a lintel to a window and as a garden seat In a footnote he adds that an old man of the name of Edward James, known as "Ned of Caldey," who died in 1880, made this statement to Mr Morris, a stonemason of Tenby According to Mr Morris there were with it other inscribed stones, one of which was preserved for a long time in the basement of the tower These have disappeared

The first abbot of Caldey was Pyro, succeeded by St. Samson, the patron saint of Caldey, who died at Dol in Brittany Reading this in the small Caldey guide-book, I betook myself this morning to Albert le Grand's monumental *Vies des Saints de la Bretagne Armorique* Albert confirms the Caldey legend An angel appeared to the father of Samson commanding him to dispatch his son overseas The future saint learned the alphabet in one day, and the rudiments of the Latin tongue in one month. He renounced all the pleasures of the flesh, never slept in

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a bed, and went several weeks without allowing food to pass his lips. Still in his novitiate, he restored to life a child bitten by a viper and *in extremis*. To the bite he applied Holy Water, praying continuously for three hours. I do not know whether or not this miracle occurred in Caldey. Legend has it that Samson banished all snakes from the island, which is free from such reptiles to-day; then he doubled the size of the isle and provided an abundance of water. Later on he returned to Brittany to nurse his dying father. Finally, on the death of Pyro, he was elected abbot of Caldey, but remained only eighteen months on the island. He triumphed gloriously over a dragon; he mounted a horse that none could ride save he; his enemies fell dead when he raised his hand. He died in A.D. 565.

Some time in the ninth century Caldey was raided by the Danes, and remained desolate for two hundred years.

In 1113, or later, Caldey attracted a few Benedictine monks, who ruled over the island for four hundred years. When the monasteries were suppressed, the island was bought by John Bradshaw of Presteign and subsequently passed through the hands of seven other owners.

In 1897 the island was bought by the Rev. William Done Bushell, a Fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge, and senior mathematical master at Harrow. When I went to Harrow in 1876, Mr. Bushell was house-master of one of the small houses.

Mr. Bushell, at the age of sixty, restored the old Priory House and lived in it. As his son puts it, in an introduction to a pamphlet written by his father and reprinted

recently. "He did his best to retain and bring to remembrance all that remained of those who formerly worshipped in this isle of Saints." The late Lord Halifax and others were greatly interested in a scheme to restore the island to a community of Anglican Benedictines. In 1907 Mr Bushell sold Caldey to Abbot Aelred, who built the present monastery. . . .

What followed may have broken Mr Bushell's heart. When my hostess told me this story I recalled the old disused chalkpit at Hursley to which Keble retired to weep when Newman went over to Rome. These Anglican monks left the Church of England and—with some of the islanders—were cordially welcomed by the Church of Rome. Inasmuch as these gentlemen acted according to their lights, comment is superfluous, but a sinner may be pardoned if he is of opinion that Lord Halifax and Mr Bushell were not treated too handsomely. They had raised many thousands of pounds spent upon the new monastery. Their beneficiaries remained in their snug quarters, but they found to their dismay that Rome was less generous than England. They had to mortgage their property for £30,000, they were unable to pay the interest. Finally, they left Caldey very sorrowfully. About the same time some Anglican Sisters, who had established themselves in St. Bride's Bay, fired by the example of the Caldey monks, also crossed over to Rome. But they—alas!—having little to offer save their bodies and souls, were not so welcome. Soon afterwards they found themselves so forlorn and destitute that they threw themselves on the compassion and protection of a rich young Roman Catholic who rose miraculously to the opportunity of saving his soul! He can be described without giving

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offence as a sort of St. Francis Assisi before the light came to him. Anyway, the miracle happened. He, too, abandoned the primrose path and became something of a saint.

### 3

The abbey church and buildings were designed by Mr. Coates Carter, and built of Caldey limestone. The high altar is made of stones brought from a number of abbeys and priories which flourished in England and Wales before the Reformation.

A lay brother showed me the church, the refectory, the library, but not the rooms which abut on a quadrangle of turf. In this quadrangle I espied two tortoises and an aloe. Only one woman is allowed to enter these precincts, the Queen of England. On the north side of the approach to the monastery I noted a grove of *macrocarpa*, brilliantly green, a vivid appeal to the eye. Inside the grove the trees are alive but colourless, a dingy brown. The symbolism is obvious. The monks wear a white habit with a black cowl. They are not permitted to read a newspaper or any novel. My hostess told me a pathetic little story. The sister of a lay brother sent to him from time to time postal orders, small grants in aid taken out of her wages as a domestic servant. These orders were never cashed! They were found on a shelf covered with dust.

Of more interest to me was the little church of St. David, within a hundred yards of the bungalow belonging to my hostess, standing in a churchyard. Here lie the saints—and others. On every grave were fresh flowers.



The dead are never forgotten in Caldey How old is this tiny church? Nobody knows

Of equal interest is the church adjoining the old priory, now the guest house Some of the faithful believe that here the Holy Grail is hidden The Benedictine monks gave the church the name of St. Illtyd According to Mr Bushell the oldest part of the priory is the battlemented tower with walls four feet thick The tower of the church is surmounted by a rude stone spire Why was it placed here? It might have served as a landmark to sailors.

The garden of the priory includes a large pond where I hoped to see fat carp It must have been a fish-stew long ago The monks are too busy in the fields to keep this garden in perfect order, but it cast its spell You can approach it by a private path which winds through a miniature combe, a natural wood and water garden Hard by is the ruin of a mill I saw rusty machinery and several mill-stones No woman in the island will walk through this combe, because it is said to be haunted by the ghost of the last miller, who went mad Unable to cope with him, unable at the moment to get aid from the mainland, the islanders confined him in the mill, barring the window, barred to this day They gave him food and drink, but noticed, to their horror, that he was digging a grave He dug it, lay down in it, and died! There is another ghost, a white lady, of whom I know nothing The islanders affirm that a luminous glow, often seen in the priory buildings, indicates the burial of treasure, possibly the Holy Grail At night shrieks are often heard, 'revenants' touch the islanders, a black robed monk, six feet in height, with his cowl drawn over his head, has been seen wandering about.

Caldey men and women have to cross to Tenby to register their votes. Humorously enough, the men vote for labour; the women vote for the conservative candidate. Fifty-fifty. They might agree to pair, inasmuch as the men equal in number the women, but the voting is regarded as a jaunt and a "jolly." The men return from Tenby lying in the bottom of the boat!

In Georgian days orgies were held on Caldey, but I can learn nothing about them. It is certain that the whole island was once a burying-ground for those who lived on the mainland. Why? Because ghosts cannot cross the water. Innumerable bones have been found and are still found. These are taken up and placed in the Ossuary.

My hostess told me a tragic story. In the winter of 1834, at Christmas time, a gay wedding-party of islanders left Caldey for Tenby, where the bride and groom were married. On the return journey the boat foundered off the Skur Rock. None survived. The bodies were washed ashore. This loss of the Caldey boat is still green in the memory of the islanders. It is not surprising that some of them refuse to leave the island. The mother of a girl with whom I talked has not set foot on the mainland for more than fourteen years.

The laws of *meum* and *tuum* are strictly observed. Parcels and papers are placed on a ledge outside the only shop. Any Autolycus could snap them up. Invariably these parcels await their rightful owners. Long ago, in Sark, I saw money left by the wayside near the causeway

connecting the two islands The money lay upon a sheet of paper with a few explanatory lines Good Samaritans were asked to buy this and that for the stay at homes I took pains to inquire if this island custom was dishonoured now and again It was not

The postal arrangements in Caldey curtsy to the tides Nevertheless, all boatmen who bring trippers carry letters to Tenby

Children are not born in Caldey An expectant mother crosses to Tenby. On one occasion a Caldey child was badly burned A gale was raging Thanks to the Trinity Brethren who laid the cable transmitting electrical power to the lighthouse there is telephonic communication with Tenby A doctor crossed in the lifeboat, he effected a landing at the risk of his life

## 6

The Benedictines left Caldey under the goad of necessity There may have been other reasons Then the island was bought by the Cistercians Why did they send Frenchmen and Belgians to an island belonging to the British? A lot of claptrap has been printed about their rights plenipotentiary The Trappists have been presented to a credulous public as "Men of Mystery" who can do what they please Rank rubbish! Probably the Prior, if he has any sense of humour, is amused, although he holds his tongue

The founder of the Cistercian Order was an Englishman, Stephen Harding, now St Stephen, born in Dorset, educated in Sherborne The boat which carried me to

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Caldey is named *Stephen Harding*. St. Stephen began his life's work at Molesme in Burgundy. The monks lived on roots and herbs, rose at midnight to sing the praises of God, and toiled all day on a stubborn soil to wrest from it their meagre sustenance. I am setting down what I found in an article to which my kind hostess called my attention. St. Stephen left Molesme to found a new house at Citeaux. St. Benedict had said: "They are true monks who live by the labour of their hands." At Citeaux no monk, unless ill, was allowed to be idle. William of Malmesbury speaks of St. Stephen as a most genial man, smiling, affable, and charming to speak to, with a genius for organization. When Alberic died in 1109, the monks elected Stephen as their Abbot. He banished all pageantry from his church; he launched the Cistercians on a tradition of extreme simplicity, which—as the writer of this article points out—"blossomed into the austere beauty of Tintern, Fountains, Rivaulx and the other great abbeys of England." But the lack of funds, once more, paralysed his activities. Did fervent prayer prevail? When the Order seemed doomed to extinction, a clang of the bell aroused the porter at the gates. "Opening the grille, he saw thirty young noblemen seeking admission. From that day Citeaux began to flourish; within twenty years there were one hundred abbeys in Europe, within a century there were seven hundred of these for monks and nine hundred for nuns!"

St. Stephen died in 1134, a great Englishman, one of the greatest, and his name should be honoured throughout the kingdom.

Concerning the Trappists on Caldey, we know what they do. Here is their time-table:

# MY VAGABONDAGE

- 3 a.m. Night Office, Angelus.
- 5 a.m. Private Masses.
- 6.30 a.m. Prime and Chapter
- 7.30 a.m. Breakfast.
- 8 a.m. Tierce, High Mass, Sext.
- 12 noon. Dinner, Angelus, Meridian.
- 1.0 to 2.0 p.m. Rest.
- 6.15 p.m. Vespers.
- 7 p.m. Supper

## 5

All the little bays on the island are enchanting on a fine summer's day. There are limpid pools where rare sea-anemones may be found, not to mention prawns, crabs, and lobsters. When a sou'-westerly gale is raging, spin-drift flies over the island. There are caves into which the daring swimmer can venture when the tide is out. It is suicidal to leave the bays, where strong currents swirl round the headlands. We had a picnic tea in Sand Top Bay, where samphire grows. The stark cliffs are unscalable. We had this lovely bay to ourselves. I hoped to see a seal or a porpoise, but was disappointed. Overhead the gulls mewed. Presently I heard the monastery bell.

Whilst the others were bathing, I wondered if I could write a romantic novel dealing with life in this Isle of Saints. My hostess had told me of a lay brother who had been seen by her kissing and caressing the wild flowers. And then she mentioned the *Pot of Basil*. Keats chose as the setting for the tragedy a palace in Florence. It might have been a more poignant tale, if Isabella had been a daughter of Caldey and Lorenzo a Trappist. Isabella's brethren murdered Lorenzo and hid his body. What

would the monks of Caldey do if they discovered one of their Order breaking his vows? My imagination shrinks in horror from any deed of violence. Being supreme upon this island, the Prior might banish Isabella. And then Lorenzo would mourn her loss whatever penance might be imposed. I could picture him at work digging his grave in the lonely churchyard; I could see him, distraught and wretched, kissing the flowers upon the graves near by, inhaling their fragrance, thinking of what he had lost, even as Abelard thought of Héloïse. I shall never write such a novel, because I am distressfully aware that my imagination would run riot. If such a situation arose to-day in Caldey, anticlimax would be inevitable. The Prior would dismiss from the Order a monk who had broken his vows. It is likely that he would urge Lorenzo to marry Isabella at a registry office! Together they would leave the island. Apart from this, if I attempted to deal with such a theme, I should have to spend many months on Caldey establishing contact with minds so alien to my own that such contact could never become intimate.

Until quite recently Caldey was happily free from the imposition of rates. I cite a description by George Owen:

The island is very fertile and yeeldeth plenty of corne. All their plowes goe with horses, for oxen the inhabitants dare not keepe, fearing the purveyors of the pirates,\* who often make provisions there, by their own commission, and commonly to the contentment of the inhabitants, when conscionable thieves arrive there. . . . Yt is nowe growen a question in what hundred of Pembrokeshire this island should be, whether in Kemes as parcell of St. Dogmell's, to which it appertayned, or parte of the next hundred of the maine; and untill this doubt be decided the inhabitants are content to rest exempt from any payment of taxations with any hundred.

\* These pirates infested the Bristol Channel.

One of these pirates was the famous Paul Jones, after whom a bay was named Here, possibly, the Danes landed when they raided the island Jones wanted water On an island he was reasonably safe Thus beach is the best for the hauling up of boats Mr Bushell has much to say about the name of the island Caldey is not cold, warmed as it is by the Gulf Stream In Italian *caldo* means "hot" There is a Norse word 'keld,' meaning a spring of water Caldey has a magnificent spring of water, from which the Norse vikings replenished their casks There is a conjecture that the name is corrupted from Scaldy, the island of the scalds, or bards

The Trappists now on Caldey are allowed seven hours' sleep, seven hours of Divine Office and Mass, one hour for meals, four hours for study and private prayer, and five hours for heavy manual labour' Mr Griffith Jones, writing in 1932, speaks of them as young men, with an average age of not more than thirty Thirteen at that time were professed brothers and the others novices and lay brothers One man sold all that he had and came from Australia, but was sent away sorrowful

A postulant becomes a novice after a year When a postulant presents himself in Caldey, his clothes are taken from him and put away He can ask for them at any time and leave a life of obedience, poverty and chastity No effort would be made to keep him, rather the contrary Finally, the day comes sooner or later when he is ordained a sub-deacon The lay clothes are brought into the church The bishop urges the novice at this last moment to reassume a layman's garb if he is not sure of himself after the *Kyrie Eleison* has been solemnly chanted The novice approaches the altar, kneels, and prostrates himself face

downwards. A long pause follows. Then the novice rises and advances to the bishop who receives him into the Order.

## 6

The caves on Caldey are remarkable. On the north side of the island, the visitor is invited to crawl on all fours through a tunnel in the cliff into a small chamber opening into a much larger chamber where stalactites, with the co-operation of stalagmites, are forming themselves into columns, as at Cheddar. The Cathedral Caves, to the north of Sand Top Bay, are as large as Ely cathedral! In Nanna's cave, on the south-east side of the island, mammoth remains, implements, and other indications that the cave was habited by prehistoric man, have challenged the interest of antiquarians.

I am looking at a photograph of a little child clinging to the new Calvary which overlooks Priory Bay. The cross is of birch-wood; the life-size figure of Christ has been carved out of teak. To those in peril on the sea, whatever their beliefs, this Calvary must have quickening significance. John Knox, that dour Puritan, might commend its presence here, and stand bare-headed before it. How many millions have turned to the Christ on the Cross; how many millions have turned from Him?

*Let little children come unto Me!*

Their faith never fails.

My eyes rested upon this Calvary when I left the Isle of Saints. It explains the lives of the Trappists and their sacrifice of the pleasures of the flesh. Whatever we may think of their silence and austerities, let us remember that



they pray continuously for others. One can compare them perhaps with men who devote their lives to research work, sacrificing so much with an ardour and enthusiasm difficult indeed for the ordinary man to understand. And who dares to indict the potency of prayer? It may well be that the supplications of the monks of Caldey are not, as the profane contend, a waste of time.

## CHAPTER XI

### ST. DAVID'S SHRINE

*Giraldus Cambrensis—Fenton—Owen—William Jones—The Buckstone—Shoulder of Mutton Inn—Sarah Siddons—A Country Gentleman—Merlin—A Fairy Tale—Carmarthen—The Valley of Roses—Mermaids—Tenby—The Sea Sergeants—An Inexpensive Banquet—The Whites—St. Julian's Chapel—Manorbier Castle—Carew Castle—Picton Castle—Solva—The Cathedral—The Bishops' Palace.*

#### I

ANY vagabond who wishes to wander through the lesser well-known parts of South Wales should read Cliffe's *South Wales*, published in 1848, the cheap reprint of Giraldus Cambrensis, and—if he can get them—George Owen's *Description of Pembrokeshire*, and Richard Fenton's *Pembrokeshire*, a fine quarto, superbly illustrated, printed in large type, published in 1811, the Comet year. The copy of the last, now on my desk, was lent to me by the Librarian of the University College of Wales, to whom I tender herewith my warmest thanks. Fenton is incapable of being dull; he brought to his task a zest of peculiar piquancy; obviously he loved the intimate personal details which establish atmosphere and credibility.

A friend proffered good advice when I told him that I hoped to visit St. David's cathedral

'Keep that,' he said, "to the last You will appreciate the more a miracle in stone if you approach it leisurely, being careful to keep away from the industrial Infernos Why not cross the Severn after passing Gloucester? I promise you an enchanting pilgrimage if you fetch a compass Go through Monmouth, Brecon, and Carmarthen "

Clarissa approved this itinerary She had been to Tenby, she had never landed on Caldey, or seen St David's She recalled, whetting my anticipation to keener edge, provocative names such as Golden Grove, Stepside and the Valley of Red Roses, she laid emphasis upon the pastoral beauty of Pembrokeshire "Little England beyond Wales'

I crossed the Severn, the Wye, and the Usk, not to mention lesser streams dear to the angler Next spring, if the gods smile on me, I hope to pass a fortnight at Llanthony, where (so I'm assured) both fishing and food are good At Llanthony I shall see the abbey and glean information about that king of beggars, Father Ignatius

I tarried awhile in "delightsome" Monmouth, skirting regretfully Symonds Yat and the Forest of Dean, which in the middle ages afforded sanctuary to robbers In the reign of Charles I the forest contained 43,000 acres In 1667 only two hundred large oaks and beeches were standing An American might describe Dean as an "incomparable reservation," which it is Iron mines in it were opened and

worked by the Romans. In Monmouth was born the hero of Agincourt. To-day what Gray described as the "seat of pleasure" has become a seat of learning. Education is better and cheaper than elsewhere. The Free School was founded by William Jones, who accumulated a large fortune in London during the reign of James I. This worthy returned to Wales in disguise, pretended poverty, and was refused relief till he reached Monmouth, where he was generously treated. There he reassumed his real character and testified gratitude by founding the school.

I lingered upon the fine bridge spanning the Monnow, and spent a few minutes in the quaint church upon the far side. A vagabond should walk to the Buckstone, a rocking-stone, where deer sheltered. Dr. Paris writes humorously of it: "When the Druids perceived a stone possessing so uncommon a property as to oscillate when pushed, they dextrously contrived to make it answer the purpose of an ordeal, and by regarding it as the touchstone of truth acquitted or condemned the accused by its motions." This Buckstone is not unlike the Toad Rock near Tunbridge Wells.

After leaving Monmouth, the road to Brecon meanders beside Usk, with the Black Mountains frowning down upon a smiling valley. Why did I see no hikers? To my surprise I saw few cars, although this is the holiday season.

In Brecon, or Brecknock, I slaked my thirst with a glass of excellent dry sherry at the Shoulder of Mutton Inn. Here Sarah Siddons was born in a small room, about nine by fourteen feet, with a fireplace in the corner, oak flooring, and two windows looking upon a dark passage. I said to the girl who showed me this dismal apartment:

"Mrs Siddons never saw the light of day in this room "

"Indeed she did "

"But there isn't any "

She laughed.

This little inn is charming, but—lack-a day!—four year old mutton, roasted and well basted, is a memory of the past.

The landlady told me that Roger Kemble and his wife were on tour, in 1755, when our greatest actress made her first appearance on a stage absurdly small for such a tremendous personality

The Brecknock Beacons are too well known to be described

The town is famous for its public walks, but a get there—quick public refuses to walk! In the keep of the ruined castle, the bishop of Ely, a prisoner, held a conference with the crafty Buckingham which led to the downfall of Richard Crookback It led also to the downfall of His Grace of Buckingham He was attainted and beheaded (without legal trial), at Salisbury on the second of November, 1483 In August, 1485, Henry Richmond, afterwards Henry VII, landed at Milford Haven, and on the twenty first of the same month Richard was slain at Bosworth The son of Buckingham was restored by Henry to his honours in 1486 when he was a boy of eight This boy, when he came to manhood entertained notions of *his* right to the throne, and incurred the enmity of Cardinal Wolsey He was executed on Tower Hill, in May, 1521 All his honours were forfeited, and he was degraded from the Most Noble Order of the Garter

I have mentioned this, with seeming irrelevance, because any wayfarer through this part of Wales interested in the

## ST. DAVID'S SHRINE

past is somewhat confounded when he is told of squires who have lived on their small estates from time immemorial. They, let it be noted, may have quarrelled furiously and continuously amongst themselves, but they refused to meddle with affairs of state, whereas the overlords, particularly the lords of the Marches, plunged tempestuously into politics, losing lands and heads.

Fenton gives an admirable description of a country gentleman of his day, *circa* 1800:

His style of living and hospitality were of a character then but little known to men of his moderate fortune. . . . He farmed his demesne, and then produced his own grain, he could vouch for his malt, and piqued himself on having the native and staple liquor of the country in a perfection that made it proverbial. . . . His gardens supplied him with fruit of the choicest kind, abundance of filberts, nay, walnuts and mulberries were found in his dessert. Fish he never lacked, being entitled to a tithe as lay impropriator of the parish. Besides a plentiful poultry court and farm-yard, a well-stocked dove-cote, ponds for wild fowl and glades, of which I remember three in use for taking woodcocks in winter, and a sheep walk famed for its sweet mutton, furnished his table with the substantials. . . . Among his commendable qualities, a spirit for planting was not the least prominent. . . . He devoted a tree to the birth of all his children and grandchildren, who were numerous, and there was not an event of any importance in his time, but what was so recorded. . . .

Gentlemen of this kidney may still be found in the remote districts of the Principality. Long may they reign over themselves and their dependants!

### 3

Carmarthen is reputed to have been the birthplace of Merlin. There appear to have been three Merlins, but Mr.

Jones writes of the Trinity as the Keltic Wonderchild, 'born of a Mortal mother and an Otherworld father' I read somewhere that the fairies fled from Carmarthen Why? In Pembrokeshire markets they buy wares, but are not seen coming or going If a man loses his way, after nightfall, the fairies guide him home From a delightful chapter on the Little People in Mr Jones's book, I steal a story which I know will delight those who remain children at heart whatever their years may be I shall tell it in my own words

The son of a widow saw a maiden combing her locks by a lake He proffered bread and cheese and, possibly, a caress, but she eluded his grasp, saying

'Thou of the moist bread,  
I do not love thee!'

She vanished The man's mother suggested an offering of better baked bread Shortly afterwards, when hanging about the lake, the youth espied cattle walking upon the water! The maiden appeared, smiling She allowed her lover to take her hand, ate his bread, and promised to become his wife—on conditions if her husband gave her three blows without cause, she would leave him Again she vanished A man of great stature, accompanied by two maidens, presented himself He pledged himself to give his daughter in marriage, if the young man could say which of the maidens she was The poor fellow, unable to tell them apart, was about to admit as much, when one thrust forward her foot He pointed to her The father nodded, saying that he would give his daughter as many sheep, cattle, goats and horses as the girl could count at a breath As she

## ST. DAVID'S SHRINE

counted, the animals emerged from the lake. The couple married, lived happily, and had three sons. One day he touched her shoulder playfully, enjoining her to fetch a pony to go to a christening. She warned him to be careful. Later, at a wedding, she began to sob. He again touched her, asking why she wept. She replied that the married couple were about to enter into trouble, and that her own husband's troubles might soon begin, inasmuch as he had twice struck her without cause. Years passed. One day, the fairy wife laughed at a funeral. Again touching her, the husband told her to be quiet. "When people die," she whispered, "they go out of trouble. Farewell!" So speaking, she called her cattle by name:

"Hump-brindled, Hornless-brindled,  
Rump-brindled, White-freckled,  
Four meadow-speckled ones,  
Old White-faced,  
And grey Squint-eye,  
With the white bull  
From the King's court,  
And the little black calf  
Which is on the hook,  
Do thou also come home quite sound!"

They followed her (including the slaughtered black calf hung up on a hook), and disappeared into the lake. However, the mother reappeared to her sons and taught them medicine and the use of herbs.

Welsh girls have been indicted as unchaste. What is still a custom in the peninsula of Portland may be honoured in Wales. According to Welsh law, a test may be imposed



if the groom entertains doubts concerning his bride's virginity "Let her clothing be cut at the height of the groin, and let a yearling ox with greased tail be placed in her hands, should she be able to hold the animal by the tail, let her take it as part of her dowry, if not, let her go without any "

How many young women submitted to this test?

My impressions of the people of South Wales are mixed I detect something definitely Irish and Scotch in them, a Scotch canniness and an Irish courtesy *Noblesse oblige* Every Welshman claims descent from princes, who, unquestionably, exercised *droits de seigneur* As in Brittany, if you wish to talk to the older people, you must be prepared for reserves of speech which, at first, are disconcerting, the more so if you are curious about customs and beliefs still dear to them

It would be a pleasure to speak handsomely of their looks But in these I was disappointed The girls I saw would be ill advised to take part in beauty contests The men, sturdy enough, are on the short side

In the Ivy Bush Hotel, at Carmarthen, Sir Richard Steele—described by the worthy Mrs Barbauld as "a character vibrating between virtue and vice"—composed *The Conscious Lovers* He is buried in St Stephen's Church, in a vault belonging to the Scurlock family He married the only daughter and heiress of Jonathan Scurlock. We paused to look at the obelisk erected to the memory of the gallant but peppery Picton In 1846 the original monument, surmounted by a statue of the hero, was in a state of such dilapidation that it had to be pulled down

The narrow streets of Carmarthen are, I believe, a

## ST. DAVID'S SHRINE

source of revenue to solicitors who deal with claims for motor accidents! Somehow we wriggled through these twisting alleys without misadventure. Then, on our way to Tenby, we passed Golden Grove, and sped through the Valley of Roses, where I saw no roses except on the cheeks of the children. We had not time to visit Merlin's Chair, an opening in the rock near Abergwilly where the wizard made his prophecies. At Golden Grove, Jeremy Taylor, who married a natural daughter of Charles I, took refuge, taught school, and wrote some of his most famous works. Cliffe speaks of Llandilo Vawr as one of the sweetest places in Wales. Spenser sung of the "woody hills of Dynevor."

I am sensible of irritation, a shingles of mind and memory, when I pause to reflect that this enchanting part of Wales was not known to me forty years ago when my lungs and legs were at their best. Partly through indolence, partly through ignorance, partly also because I had crammed for the Indian Civil Service at Penmaenmawr, I ruled off my map the Wales of which I knew nothing. I should feel less regret, if what I have written here had virtue to lure other Englishmen into Carmarthen, Brecknock and Pembrokeshire.

## 4

We passed Stepside and rolled into Tenby, the ancient town with a thousand years of history encompassing it, which looks down upon two entrancing little beaches, the town whose harbour seemed to me to hold the bluest, most limpid water in the kingdom. According to Fenton, Tenby,

more than a hundred and thirty years ago, was the admiration of all who saw it

Mermaids haunt this wonderful coast line with its secluded coves and caves, its inaccessible rocks, its wealth of colour. In the eighteenth century one was caught by a Pembrokeshire fisherman. Mr Gwynn Jones tells the tale

"If you let me go," she pleaded, "I promise to call to you three times when you are in danger." He put her back into the sea. (Did he kiss the darling? I hope so.) Afterwards he heard her cry three times, telling him to ship his nets and return to land, which he did, and was the only one out of twenty fishermen to be saved from a tempest

When I told this story to Clarissa, she chuckled. We play "swaps." And I have to admit that her Oliver, as a rule, is a better man than my Roland

"Suppose he hadn't let her go?" she suggested. "Would they have lived together happily?" One of my maids from Dorset says that a gaffer in her village remarked, 'When I walked out wi' my old 'ooman, afore we up an' married, I told the lil dear I'd a mind to eat her. Gawd! I wish I had.'"

I must avoid, if possible, what is set down in the guide-books about Tenby. No mention is made of a most remarkable society of gentlemen, who ruffled it in the eighteenth century under the quaint appellation *The Sea Sergeants*. Their number was not to exceed twenty five. They wore, when they met, coifs, a habit, and a silver star with the figure of a dolphin in the centre. The examination of a candidate before admission was set down by Fenton from the original manuscript

# ST. DAVID'S SHRINE

## MODUS EXAMINANDI

Do you bear true allegiance to his majesty?

Are you a member of the Church of England as by law established?

Will you be faithful to your friends in prosperity, and cherish them in adversity?

Do you desire to be admitted a member of this society?

Will you faithfully observe the rules and orders that have been read to you?

Will you, upon the honour of a gentleman, keep the secrets of the society, and the form of your admission into it?

In writing to each other they subscribed themselves as brothers. On a Wednesday, July 31, 1745, the Society of Sea Sergeants, with six guests, thirty-one in all, dined at Carmarthen. They dined well—and inexpensively.

Food . . . . .	£3 17 6
Port, twelve bottles . . . .	1 4 0
White wine, two bottles . . .	4 0
Rhenish, six pints . . . . .	6 0
Ale, forty-two quarts . . . .	14 0
Cyder, twenty-five quarts . .	8 4
Punch . . . . .	2 6
Tobacco . . . . .	2 6

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£6 18 10

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There is only one item which is significant: a bowl of punch for thirty-one gentlemen supplied for half a crown! But all the fishermen at Tenby were smugglers. And most of the squires and parsons found kegs of brandy, the nectar of La Charente, on their premises. Smuggling was not regarded as a crime, but as an adventure.

I have to add, with reluctance, that many of my fellow countrymen in this Little England beyond Wales were wreckers

At one time Tenby was very prosperous, enriched by the wool trade. If the pilgrim wanders into the church of St Mary, with its spire of one hundred and fifty two feet, he will find two effigies of the Whites, habited in the correct costume of their calling and times, with large purses at their girdles. The Whites were great citizens of Tenby, tracing their lineage back to Jasperly White, who flourished about 1265

## 5

In former days, before the Reformation, fishermen assembled every morning in St Julian's Chapel, when prayers were offered up by a priest for safety to themselves and success to their undertakings. Even to day, certain fathers in Tenby besprinkle their children with water on New Year's Day. If a grandfather be available he performs the rite, dipping a sprig of box into a bowl of fair water. As soon as I returned home I consulted Lean. He tells a different story.

Children in Tenby used to visit the houses on New Year's morning sprinkling the furniture with water, and singing

Here we bring new water from the well so clear,  
For to worship God with, this happy New Year,  
Sing levy dew, sing levy dew, the water and the wine  
With seven bright gold wares and bugles that do shine.  
Sing re gn of fair maid, with gold upon her toe,  
Open you the west door and let the old year go  
Sing reign of fair maid, with gold upon her chin,  
Open you the east door and let the new year in "

The sea-fishing is excellent; and I make no doubt that bass can be caught with a fly, casting from the rocks, in August and September. But please remember, anglers all, that to catch bass you must see them. A Tenby fisherman harpooned a whale in the Bristol Channel, which with two others ran for the shore. When the whales were killed the sea was ensanguined for more than half a mile. A warship towed away the carcasses, and all Tenby celebrated the removal of an overpowering nuisance.

Harry Richmond hid in a cellar which runs under the main street, probably the cellar of the Mayor, Thomas White, a wealthy wine-merchant, whose fine mansion was still in existence in 1805. White provided a vessel for the fugitive, which took him to Brittany. For this service he was rewarded, when Harry came to the throne, with a grant for life of the king's lands round the town.

From Tenby it is but a short distance to Manorbier Castle. If I had good enough conceit of myself to attempt to write a picaresque novel dealing with that Helen of Wales, the Princess Nesta, I should write it at Manorbier. The castle was built by Gerald of Windsor, the husband of the frail Nesta, in the reign of Henry I. Giraldus was their grandson, and if you read his description of Manorbier, you may agree with him that it is indeed "the paradise of Wales." The ruins, however, are late thirteenth-century. In the well in the courtyard were found the great keys of the castle, now in the Tenby Museum; Cromwell besieged it in 1648. But I refer the reader to the guide-books. Giraldus was not buried at Manorbier, but at St. David's.

The ruins of Carew Castle are superb. This demesne was part of Nesta's dowry. Here Sir Rhys ap Thomas entertained Henry VII. It overlooks an estuary of Milford Haven. The Wizard of the North ought to have described the gorgeous tournament which took place when Sir Rhys was made a Knight of the Garter. A thousand guests were royally entertained for five days. The north side is still magnificent.

## 6

Not far from Haverfordwest is Picton Castle, built by William de Picton in the reign of William II. At the end of the fourteenth century it passed into the possession of the Philipps family, who held it till 1868. It has, I believe, been constantly inhabited ever since it was built. At the beginning of the last century Lord Milford added to it. Fenton writes of it as "a castle in the midst of possessions and forests coeval with itself, proudly looking down over a spacious domain on woods of every after-growth to an inland sea . . ."

Haverfordwest, another town with zig-zag narrow streets, was peopled by the Flemings. Time was, not so long ago, when one omnibus conveyed passengers to St David's on three days a week in the summer! You have to traverse sixteen miles and seventeen hills through a countryside which has ceased to be pastoral. I told myself that I might be approaching Land's End in Cornwall. The few trees visible are warped and twisted by the fury of the sou'-west gales. Giraldus Cambrensis speaks of the land as "rocky, barren, and fruitless."

As an *apéritif* to the full meal of interest so bountifully spread in and about St. David's Cathedral, we came suddenly upon Solva, a narrow inlet suggesting Fowey, a gem of a tiny port affording safe harbourage to a few brown-sailed fishing boats. Solva had the ill reputation of hanging out false lights to decoy the hapless mariner. Other times, other customs. When these treacherous coasts were harried by the Danes and the pirates infesting the Bristol Channel, lights may have been hung up to lure to destruction savage enemies. And then, later on, bad habits were difficult to eradicate.

The cathedral lies in a hollow. In my ignorance I supposed that shelter from the four winds of heaven was sought. Not so. The original builders were apprehensive of attacks from pirates.

The patron saint of Wales was born A.D. 460, the same year, to cite an ancient author, "in which Britain was dismembered by the Saxons, God recompensing that loss by the birth of St. David, one of the greatest lights the church ever enjoyed, both in regard to the sanctity of his life, vigour of his authority, and zeal in repressing heresy and exalting ecclesiastical discipline." The Dean of St. David's was good enough to spare time to take me round the cathedral. He told me that the saint's church was probably built of wood and wattles. St. David's has had the greatest number of bishops of any see in the kingdom, twenty-six of whom had not only the title but the full power of archbishops. The see can boast of one saint, three lord high treasurers, one lord privy seal, one chancellor of Oxford, one of England, and—in the person of Ferrar—a martyr.

This magnificent fane, with the ruins of an incomparable



Bishop's Palace, took my breath away, because the foot passenger, after leaving the small town, comes upon it unexpectedly, even as he comes upon Clovelly. Facing him are thirty nine steps, nicknamed the Thirty Nine Articles. I paused on the top step. After leaving Tenby crowded with summer visitors, so crowded that it was almost impossible to find a lodging, I had made sure of finding hundreds of cars in St David's. As I stared at the cathedral I could see three persons, no more. Let others account for this, if they can. After my return to Bath, I asked everyone I met if they had visited St. David's. One lady thought that it lay between Bath and Bristol.

Five minutes later I had established contact with Dean Morgan. We entered the cathedral. The nave has something of the silvery radiance of the nave of Winchester. Not so long ago the walls were whitewashed. Quite recently the almost black oak roof underwent the process of "pickling." To day this gorgeous roof harmonizes with the grey walls of the nave, but the chancel roof, also of wood, was painted, under the direction of Sir Gilbert Scott, a too brilliant red and gold. Time will mellow it. As at Wells, and so many other cathedrals, a rood screen of Henry de Gower, lacking unity of design, and surmounted by the organ, cuts off the view of the chancel. From the extreme end of the Lady Chapel beyond the chancel to the western entrance is a distance of one hundred yards. From this western door to the Lady Chapel is a gradual ascent of exactly twelve feet.

A text book written by Edward Foord, published by Dent, entitled "St David's," which is cheap at half a crown,

deals in detail with the architecture. I had it in my pocket when I met the Dean—and left it there. What he told me which is not in this text-book I shall set down. He pointed out a brass plate above a *miserere* in the Choir. On it were emblazoned the Royal Arms! His Majesty George V is a Canon of St. David's Cathedral.

I had seen only three persons outside the cathedral; I saw more than twenty inside. A gentleman addressed the Dean in Welsh; he replied in the same tongue. I think they had met before. He may have asked leave to accompany us. Within less than a minute, the others present joined us. Three girls, who had left their hats at home, made caps out of their pocket handkerchiefs. They listened, as we all did, to every word that was said.

It was a memorable recital lasting (as much to the Dean's surprise as mine) more than an hour. Not much time wherein to recapitulate the work of a thousand years! My imagination, such as it is, was thrilled by two incidents, one of which Mr. Foord does not mention. When the massive tower was raised centuries ago, an enormous weight was superimposed upon foundations unable to bear the strain. In 1862, Sir Gilbert Scott's masons discovered that the inner stones, not the outer, had been pulverized into dust! They had to devise a support for the upper part of the tower the while they rebuilt from the ground the lower part. This was done, but how it was done I have not the technical knowledge to say. Liquid cement solidified the dust at the risk, so I understood, of the masons' lives. At any moment the tower might have crashed. The second incident concerns the discovery of the bones of St. David and St. Justinian in the wall

above the altar in Vaughan's Chapel According to the Dean, they were hidden there after being removed from a shrine Mr Foord does set down what we were told Experts testified that these bones were those of a very tall man and a short man David was very tall, Justinian was short One skull indicated great brain capacity Humanly speaking, the relics, now enshrined in an oak, iron bound chest, are the authentic relics of the saint and Justinian

Mr Foord makes no comment upon the position of the tomb of the Earl of Richmond, father of Henry VII, which stood originally in the church of the Grey Friars at Carmarthen and was transferred to St David's by the orders of Henry VIII It is not in the exact centre of the Choir

A tomb in the south choir aisle is reputed to hold the remains of Giraldus, who, despite his fame as a writer, died a disappointed man He wished to be bishop of St David's In his place was chosen one who, according to Giraldus, was illiterate, unable to write, unable to read

The contrast between the severity of the outside of the cathedral and the embellishment of the inside is disconcerting, if you attempt to compare St David's with, say, Chartres or Mont St Michel Nevertheless, the Welsh fane is unique, the most wonderful building in the Principality

The Bishops' Palace, on the banks of the Alan, might have excited covetous feelings in Cardinal Wolsey Such prelates as Henry de Gower were indeed magnificent, but one wonders what Stephen Harding, the Cistercian and ascetic, would have thought of them The bishops of St David's owned not one but five palaces!

ST. DAVID'S SHRINE

Once to Rome thy steps incline,  
But visit twice St. David's shrine.

It is not generally known, even by Bathonians, that St. David was (and is) the patron saint of our Bath waters.

## CHAPTER XII

### MOSTLY CASTLES

*Ramsey Island—St Justinian—Hobb's Point Ferry—Pembroke Castle  
—Bodiam—Lamps of Architecture—'Life Given by God"—  
St Petrox—The Headless Lady—St Govan's Head and Chapel  
—Legend—Bell Rock—Tenderfeet—The Stack Rocks—The  
Huntsman's Leap—The Flemings—Industrial Wales—Dillwyn  
—Billingsley—Neath Abbey—Fairies—Cardiff Moors—The  
Marquess of Bute—Cardiff Castle—Poor Robin—Poor Richard.*

#### I

How fortunate I have been this year in my vagabondage!  
How much I owe to the Clerk of the Weather! After  
leaving the precincts of the cathedral, I joined a small  
picnic party, including two children of the ripe ages of  
five and seven, and we made exceeding merry in well  
named Whitesand Bay, which faces Ramsey Island and  
another islet, the bird sanctuary made famous on the  
screen by Mr Lockley. I was sorely tempted to tell the  
children that in the clefts of St David's Head crystals  
might be found which are called St David's diamonds.  
They would have been off in a jiffy. Beguiled by their  
companionship, I had no time to visit St Justinian's Chapel,  
built (so <sup>oulugra</sup> says) by Bishop Vaughan for Ramsey  
pilgrims who, without good reason, offered up prayers

before embarking upon what is still a most perilous passage. Not so long ago, the reigning monarch of Ramsey crossed over to buy Christmas presents in the town of St. David's. There he was stormbound, so I'm told, for two months!

The children and I explored some rocks above the sands. These rocks rise out of pools of translucent water. I suggested that we might, if we had time, build a town on one of the flat rocks, a town with castle, church, churchyard, village green, and houses. The firm, slightly sticky sand would lend itself to such an enterprise. I had done this with my own children, long ago, upon similar rocks near St. Jacut in Brittany. I have a "snap" of what we accomplished in some six hours. I have, too rashly, pledged myself to return to St. David's with the children to build this town.

Fenton visited Ramsey and was handsomely entertained by its king. He uses the expression "elegant conviviality." The island has a most romantic appearance, and, in Fenton's day, was regarded as the Mecca of ornithologists.

"We walked," he writes, "to the choir, an amphitheatre of rocks, precipitous and of stupendous height; from whose ledges, thickly tenanted by birds of various kinds, hundreds flew off, succeeded by fresh hundreds in uninterrupted succession, whilst the sea beneath was covered with other hundreds darkening its surface." Seagulls are esteemed by the Welsh fishermen to be reliable weather prophets. If they keep inshore, those who study their habits are well advised to copy their example; if they fly far out to sea, fair weather is assured. But candour constrains me to add that the weather was superbly fine at Tenby during my stay there and at Caldey Island.

The gulls remained inshore, thousands of them. One, to my amusement, appeared to be a permanent fixture on the head of Albert the Good, whose statue holds watch and ward over the harbour! Henry II, so the worthy Fuller chronicles, got his peregrine falcons from the Isle of Ramsey.

The view from the summits of the twin peaks is panoramic. The abundant water supply, enough formerly to work a mill, gushed from the spot where fell St. Justinian's venerable head, when his murderers decapitated him. Forthwith the saint picked up his head, even as St. Denis did, tucked it under his arm, and walked across the sea to St. David's . . . Alban Butler makes no mention of Justinian. Had I known this legend when I was listening to the Dean, I should have asked him if the skull of the shorter of the two skeletons found in the wall was separated from the body.

## 2

I returned to Tenby by another route, taking Hobb's Point Ferry across Milford Haven, where I gazed sorrowfully at the deserted docks and empty houses. Milford Haven ought to have been the Liverpool or Southampton of Wales. However, it may come to its own again when the transpontine Flying Service makes the air at all seasons safe for passengers. I beheld six seaplanes resting, like huge gulls, upon these tranquil waters.

At the Ferry, on the north side, I was much amused by a gentleman, alone in his car, who held up the traffic by his comical inability to direct his conveyance from the paddle-steamer to the narrow adit which ascends sharply

to the road beyond. Others were not amused, particularly those car-drivers who were behind him. If looks could have killed, he would have died unshriven on the jetty.

But, really, the incident was funny. We are not humorous as a race, because most of us fail to see any joke against ourselves. I beguiled a few minutes by wondering why the car-drivers were in such a devil of a hurry? What did five minutes' delay mean to them? Also, the poor fellow was so distressed at blocking the way. He cast a hunted glance at us; and I'm happy to add that the lady of our party bestowed upon him a reassuring smile. Perhaps the recording angel took note of it.

I hope that he did.

3

Pembroke Castle is being partially restored. I can conceive of better ways of spending vast sums of money, but none more fascinating, none more likely to become an obsession. I wonder if the late Lord Curzon, that patriot of many facets, not as yet honoured as is his due, was tempted to restore Bodiam Castle in Sussex, situate not far from an old manor house where I passed joyous years as a boy. At the age of twelve I made a plan of Bodiam restored. Being the son of a mother who loved Ruskin, I swore by the Seven Lamps of Architecture that I would restore this captivating ruin, set in a lake of clear water, if fortune bestowed on me the Midas touch. Yesterday I asked an architect to name the Seven Lamps. He said derisively: "Aren't there more than seven?" Ruskin names them: The Lamp of Sacrifice, The Lamp of Truth, The



Lamp of Power, The Lamp of Beauty, The Lamp of Life, The Lamp of Memory, The Lamp of Obedience

If our jerry builders worked by the light of these lamps instead of by the farthing dips which flicker over their ill-gotten gains, what an England this might be

It is not unhappily merely a question of restoring a great feudal castle. When restored, the owner would wish to live in it. Unless he were as rich as Mr William Randolph Hearst, of St Donat's, he might find it impracticable to do so. When Sir Rhys ap Thomas entertained a thousand guests at Carew, how many housemaids were in his establishment?

The castle, once one of the mightiest fortresses in the kingdom, is an eagle's eyrie on a rock. The Keep measures seventy five feet in height, and at the base the walls are nearly twenty feet in thickness. Menelaus, Gerald of Windsor, Castellan of Manorbier, owned it, and was besieged here by Paris, son of King Cadwgan. Finally, it was dismantled by Cromwell. Fenton mentions a tradition that in the famous Wogan cave, at the south east corner, there was an adit said to be the opening of a tunnel reaching to Tenby. This cave was used as a storehouse for the *stuffura* of the garrison. "Stuffura" is good, but I have failed to find the word in Smith's Latin Dictionary. Cromwell gained possession of this Gibraltar by cutting off the water supply. Three Colonels, Laugharne, Powell and Poyer, who had deserted the Parliamentarians, were tried by court martial, and condemned to death. It was decided to spare the lives of two. "Three papers," so Cliffe records, "were proffered, on two of which was written 'Life given by God'." Poyer drew the blank paper and was shot in Covent Garden in April, 1649."

Henry VII was born here, but historians differ as to the location of the room where the Countess of Richmond "lay in" during her accouchement.

From Pembroke, the wayfarer can find his way to the coast by what road he pleases. If he passes through St. Petrox, when still evening comes on, he may be vouchsafed a vision of a headless lady, driving round the parish in a carriage with headless coachman and headless team!

Who was this headless lady? In the church there is a mural tablet to her memory. She married Sir Edward Mansell, of Muddlescombe, in the county of Carmarthen. Fenton tells us that she rode in a fiery chariot from Tenby, and alighting on a farmhouse, in the vale below the church, crushed it. Is it possible—I hazard a wild guess—that this Lady Mansell was an oppressor of the poor, figuratively a chopper-off of heads? If so, her dependants after her death would believe readily enough that such a tyrant should haunt, headless, the parish where she had abused her authority.

At St. Govan's Chapel I spent two hours. The descent to the tiny oratory, half-way between the crest of the hill and the sea, is by stone steps placed higgledy-piggledy on a steep, broken path. Cliffe speaks of fifty-four, adding: "They can never be counted twice alike." I counted seventy-four. A lady of our party counted eighty-four; her husband counted seventy-nine.

The chapel holds a rude stone altar. Below it is a well, not inviting to look at, which of yore attracted countless pilgrims. Virtue has gone out of the water, but the older writers testify in no uncertain terms to the miracles of healing which took place here.

To-day the legend of St. Govan's cell is potent to attract

young men and maidens even from Tenby and distant Swansea. The saint, pursued by his enemies, fled to his cell, where the rock opened, revealing a safe hiding place. The rock closed as the enemies entered. It opened again when the villains departed and has remained open ever since. It retains, as I can testify, an impression of a body. If you insert yourself into the cavity and turn round, the unspoken wish dearest to your heart will obtain fulfilment. So many thousand persons have turned round in this cavity that a certain polish has been given to the stone.

Two men and two girls were counting the steps when I left the oratory. None of the quartet counted the same number. Of the saint they knew nothing. They had come to the headland to count the steps. All four appeared to be thrilled when I told them the legend. I warned the girls not to reveal their wish, otherwise it would not be granted. The two children with me, also warned by me, told their mother, bless them, what they had wished before they went to bed that night!

Crutches discarded by cripples who bathed in the well were seen on the stone altar within the past hundred years.

I cannot tell the curious much about the saint. Some affirm that he was Arthur's knight, Gawain. Others declare that the saint was a woman, St. Cofen, the wife of a king of Wales killed in the sixth century. This is mere guide-book tittle-tattle, but quite possibly true. Till recently he (or she) was St. Gowan.

Below the oratory lies the Bell Rock. Being oolite, it rings when struck with a pebble. But, as the guide-book points out rather artlessly, it is said to have acquired a property common to all sound limestone because, in the remote past, there was a bell here carried off by pirates.

In California, in my salad days, a drummer knocked at the door of the ranch-house. He was selling (not cheaply) magical cubes of what appeared to be common chalk. At that time, everybody who lived in wooden houses was terrified of fire, with, of course, the exception of certain far-sighted citizens who insured their houses for more than they were worth. My brother and I were under-insured, and every room was lighted with petroleum lamps. Cheap petroleum had a nasty habit of exploding. The drummer glibly affirmed that if you dropped one of his magical cubes into a basin full of petroleum, a certain ebullition would take place, an escape—so he assured a brace of tenderfeet—of inflammable gases. We supplied the basin of petroleum.

"Would you boys," he asked, "plunge a lighted match into this?"

"Not on your life," I replied.

"Gosh! I'd run like a hare, if you done it. Now—watch me."

Into the petroleum he dropped a cube. The petroleum bubbled like chalybeate water. When the ebullition subsided, our drummer struck a match upon the bosom of his pants, and thrust it alight into the petroleum. . . .

It went out!

We bought twenty dollars' worth of the cubes.

Later on, a chemist came to us to report upon certain deposits of bituminous rock. We told him about our magical cubes. How he laughed!

"You boys," he said, "are suckers. Here, get me a bowl of your petroleum." I did so. Into it he plunged a lighted match. . . .

It went out.

"Your cubes are made of chalk," he said, "very porous chalk. That caused the bubbling. Any lighted match plunged into *cold* petroleum will go out."

Apply the moral of this story to some of the information found in guide-books

Leaving St. Govan's, we had much to see worth the seeing the Sunken Forest, the Devil's Punch Bowl, the Stack Rocks, and the Huntsman's Leap, a chasm not too wide, cleared by a sportsman who afterwards died of fright.

The Stack Rocks are the nesting places of guillemots and razorbills. The eggs are laid upon the barge ledges. In a gale of wind, they turn round. They never fall into the sea below.

Would that I could describe the wild beauty of these inlets! "All that expands the spirit yet appals" Cliffe observes "Imagine the effect in a storm!" Well, imagination reels at the suggestion.

But—again I lay stress upon this point—at a moment when nearly every seaside resort in the kingdom was overcrowded with visitors, this wonderland was, I suppose, too remote to challenge attention. There is a small tea-room near St. Govan's Chapel. In front of it I counted ten cars!

## 4

Clarissa says that I ought to write something about the Flemings. I replied that Fenton, with his intimate knowledge of Pembrokeshire, confessed that he knew little about them. Was Ross—once spelt Roos—the cradle of the woollen industry? Henry I, who married Maud, daughter of the Earl of Flanders, admitted into England

swarms of these busy bees, who settled for the most part in the north. Later on, Henry II moved a surplus swarm or two to Pembrokeshire, where—so the crafty monarch hoped—they might uphold his sovereign rights against the turbulent Welsh. But the *Encyclopædia Britannica* affirms that the Flemings came to Tenby and Haverfordwest in the reign of Henry I! I pointed out to Clarissa that I was not writing a history of Little England in Wales, whereupon she retorted that nobody would read it if I did. To smooth me down, she went on:

“You are trying to tell us what is not found in the guide-books. The Flemings came to Bradford-on-Avon. Wherever they went, I suppose they practised the multiplication table. There must be a tincture of Flemish blood in us—so have at it!”

Probably (I don't blame them) the Flemings refused to learn Welsh, finding English less difficult. They were driven out of their own country by inundations; they remained loyal to the English kings, who made things easy for them. Giraldus commends them as skilful architects, good farmers, and dextrous in the manufacture of wool. Whether the superstitious Welsh imposed on the colonists their own mystical rites, or *vice versa*, none can say. Lean, in his *Collectanea*, cites lines taken from Drayton's *Polyolbion*:

A divination strange the Dutch-made English have  
Appropriate to that place,\* as though some power it gave,  
By shoulder of a ram from off the right side par'd,  
Which usually they boil, the spade-bone being bar'd,  
Which then the wizard takes, and gazing thereupon  
Things long to come foreshadows, as things done long ago,

\* ?Tenby.

## MY VAGABONDAGE

Murders, adulterous stealths, as the event of war,  
The reigns and deaths of kings they take on them to know,  
Which only to their skill the shoulder blade doth show

George Owen, writing in 1608, says "In the swaynes and labourers of this country you may often trace a Flemish origin" He speaks of the Flemings as grand trenchermen 'They will have fyve meales a daie, and if you will bestow the sixt on them, they will accept it verye kindly, and if they be but a little entreated, they will bestowe laboure on the seaventhe meal "

## 5

From Tenby I returned by a more southerly route to Bath The indentations of the coast have made impracticable a coast highway, there are byways and bypaths which I hope to explore next summer

We took the road to Swansea, Neath, and Cardiff Less than a hundred years ago Swansea was a gay resort, it is now the forge of Vulcan, famous for its tinplate works and its furnaces How often, on my way to fish in Ireland, I have seen these furnaces aglow at night, and thanked God that my lines lay in cooler places

I shrink from loose generalities about persons and places Tom indicts what may escape the critical Dick. But I must attempt to record my fleeting impressions of industrial Wales I have seen thousands of men living in mean houses with no little gardens to brighten eye or heart If I were one of them, I should feel as they do, cherishing a smouldering rancour against conditions inexorably crushing love of life out of me. Sooner or later, sooner if a social

cataclysm is to be averted, the wages of certain workers must be raised to compensate them for the hateful work which they have to do. The world must have coal and iron in all their Protean forms. But, after a descent into a coal mine, I cannot shovel coal on my fire without thinking of the begrimed miner who has spent his working life on his back or side to replenish my scuttle. I cannot poke my fire without envisaging men stripped to the waist, working by night and day under frightful conditions of heat and discomfort. . . .

Fifty years ago, gentlewomen deliberately drew down the blinds between themselves and everything offensive. In the same spirit they hated to let sunlight into their drawing-rooms, because Apollo played pranks with their carpets! They believed that omniscience had established rigid class distinctions; they also believed, as a sop to conscience, that the "rights" of the poor, if expressed forcibly, were impious.

*Fool:* Come, my lords, poor and need have no law.

*Sir Ed:* Nor necessity no right; down with them to the cellar.

It occurs to me that the screen—if it portrayed faithfully the life of the miner and smelter—would excite compassion in the whole nation, and a determination to ameliorate the lot of fellow-countrymen less happily-circumstanced than themselves.

I was, however, cheered by the looks of the young women and children, particularly the children. Paradoxically, the undisputed fact that children are better fed, dressed, and educated than their mothers is likely to provoke natural revulsion against the work which their fathers



have to do And if they, living on the spot, refuse to step into their fathers' shoes, who, pray, will take their place?

## 6

Swansea has nearly as many public parks as Bath As the guide-book drily points out, passengers on the Great Western Railway see its least attractive aspect. From the water it is nearly as arresting as Tenby The castle was rebuilt by that magnificent prince of the church, Henry de Gower of St. David's

Being a modest collector, my fancy associates this huge hive of industry with porcelain Swansea china is prized rather for its rarity than its beauty, because what little was potted, during less than a decade, happened to be designed at a bad period, when the national taste was at its nadir In 1814 porcelain was first manufactured here, although Dillwyn had made money with his sea-earthenware works The famous Billingsley was engaged, and his assistants Mr Solon observes with unconscious humour that Billingsley's attempts (crowned with success) to manufacture a paste of perfect whiteness and translucency resulted in a regular loss of ninety per cent. on each oven

The unfortunate Dillwyn dismissed these expensive artists, and porcelain of much inferior quality, after 1817, was manufactured under the direction of Timothy Bevington. In 1823 china making was abandoned

A sad story of high endeavour frustrated

My mother used to get "laver" from Swansea, a species of seaweed, with a piquancy not unlike sorrel, which was

served as a sauce with mutton. Is it still so served? In Swansea they make laver cakes.

Neath Abbey, before the Grey Friars were expelled from it, was said to be the fairest Abbey in all Wales. It is now a ruin. A monk of Neath Abbey betrayed the unhappy Edward, who was done to death so cruelly in Berkeley Castle. The Grey Friars became Cistercians. Cliffe provides a translation from some Latin document which gives us an idea of the abbey's splendours:

Here is the gold-adorned choir, the nave, the gilded tabernacle-work, the pinnacles worthy of the Three Fountains. Distinctly may be seen on the glass imperial arms; a ceiling, resplendent with kingly bearings, and on the surrounding border the shields of princes, the arms of Neath of a hundred ages. . . . The vast and lofty roof is like the sparkling heavens on high, above are seen archangels' forms. . . .

Again, what would St. Stephen Harding, apostle of simplicity, have thought of this Cistercian palace?

The lovely vale of Neath is enchanting (after you escape from the town), wood-embosomed, abounding in waterfalls, glens and gorges. Have the fairies left it, even as they left Carmarthen? There is a Roman road, Sarn Helen, which crosses the mountains on the westerly side. Parents used to caution their children when setting out to look for lost cattle and sheep: "Avoid treading near the Fairies' Rings." Old Shone—so Cliffe tells us—"observed not many years ago a long cavalcade of very diminutive persons, riding four abreast, mounted upon small white horses not bigger than dogs. . . . Another case is related of a Welsh Rip Van Winkle, who had been twenty-five years with the fairies,

and who, when he returned home, thought that he had been only five minutes away" Many of the cascades come down as the waters do at Lodore

In 1848 the best oysters, taken from the fisheries at the Mumbles, fetched from twelve to fourteen shillings a thousand!

## 7

Cardiff owes much to the second Marquess of Bute, who converted what was called the "Cardiff Moors" into a harbour I think, but I am not sure, that this enterprising nobleman was the grandson of the first Marquess, who acquired valuable estates near Cardiff which had descended to his wife through the family of the Herberts, earls of Pembroke, estates valued at £100,000 a year This grandson died in 1848 at Cardiff Castle The third Marquess, succeeding to fabulous wealth after a long minority, was portrayed by Disraeli as Lothair.

The second Marquess was a patriot and an authentic gentleman adventurer He spent £300,000 on the docks, an enterprise which at the time seemed to court failure, it turned out a great and glorious success His memory is evergreen in Cardiff I noted with surprise that in the excellent guide-book to South Wales his statue is spoken of as "a" Marquess of Bute, instead of "the" Marquess of Bute

The Castle, in the heart of the city, occupies ten acres Looking at it from the outside, it presents the appearance of a feudal fortress Seen from the garden it reminded me of Knebworth I recalled Josselin in Brittany, which

belongs to the Duc de Rohan. The outside is feudal; the architecture of the castle, as you enter the *cour d'honneur*, is Renaissance.

In 1801 the population of a small, ill-built, dirty Welsh town was 2,000; the population to-day is nearly 185,000.

In a tower still existing, Robert Curthose, Duke of Normandy, was confined for twenty-eight years at the instance of his brother, Henry I. This unhappy gentleman was also a prisoner at Corfe.

There are moments when I envy the jolly tripper as he stares negligently at the ruins of these great Welsh castles. He does not know, he does not want to know, what happened in the past. But when these castles were dismantled centuries ago, everybody did know what horrors unspeakable had been committed in them. And then they served as stone quarries, possibly the best use to which they could be put.

Do not fail to visit Llandaff and the ruins of Caerphilly.

Clarissa asked me what *Llan* means in Welsh. It means a church, or an enclosure. *Pen* is a top or head. *Llyn* is a grove. A common word without one vowel of compassion in it *Cwrw*, pronounced "kooroo," is ale. *Plas* is a hall, or any great house.

Delving into old and new tomes (as I have done) the different spelling of Welsh names, particularly the names of persons, is bewildering and slightly exasperating. Poor Robin sums this up in a quatrain:

And thus, as I am told, Ap Owen  
Is now confounded into Bowen,  
And she that lately was Ap Rice  
Is anglicized to Mrs. Price.

Clarissa, with her naughty tongue in her cheek—for I have a notion that she puts queries to me which she can answer for herself, merely to test what I candidly admit to be a smattering of learning—said approvingly

“Very pat Who was this Poor Robin?”

I told her that I blushed at her ignorance, because she had never heard of St. Stephen Harding

“You know about Poor Robin,” said I

“I do not I’ve heard of Cock Robin and some other Robin who was a famous botanist.”

I told her that *Poor Robin* was an almanac published in London from 1663 to 1776 to which Robert Herrick is said to have contributed On St David’s Day, fun was poked at all Welshmen Poor Richard was Benjamin Franklin, who first published his famous almanac in 1732 It was a best seller during five and twenty years! Clarissa had heard of Poor Richard, but had failed to link him up with Franklin

From Cardiff I flew back to Bristol

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE ISLE OF PURBECK

*A Royal Warren—Worbarrow—Corfe Castle—The Lovely Elfrida—Death in the Cup—An Enlightening Legend—St. Aldhelm's Head—Wreck of The Halsewell—Benjamin Jesty—Club-walking—Kimmeridge Clay—A Snow-storm—A Dungeon—The Purbeck Marblers—Studland—St. Nicholas of Myra—Boys in a Brine-tub—Smuggling—The Agglestone—Abbotsbury—The Bird Royal—St. Catharine's Chapel.*

#### I

THIS fascinating corner of Dorset, changed but little since the days of King John and his Saxon predecessors, is a peninsula (like Portland) bounded on two sides by the Channel and on the third by the River Frome. Once more I have to thank my friend Clarissa for her insistence that a vagabond eager to wander from the beaten tracks would find in Purbeck good hunting. Clarissa whetted my love for the chase, putting a sharper edge to it, when she placed in my hands, Mr. C. E. Robinson's *A Royal Warren*, a fine quarto, beautifully printed and illustrated, published more than fifty years ago. Fifty years ago I had visited Purbeck after a perfunctory fashion, and expected to-day to find disconcerting dislocations. However, Clarissa, with a twinkle in her eye, guaranteed agreeable disappointment.

sanctioned the destruction of this and similar castles. The answer is fairly obvious. These strongholds were hateful to the people, monuments of power abused, of constant oppression, of an out-dated tyranny. Corfe, for many centuries, was a prison house where torments were inflicted upon the captives. You can still see the loophole grates where these unfortunates wept. Here Henry I imprisoned his elder brother, Robert, here Griffin, Prince of Wales, languished in 1198. The lovely damsel of Brittany, sister of Arthur (murdered by John at Rouen), was a Corfe captive. And how many others? Thousands whose names have been forgotten. It is reasonable, therefore, to assume that Cromwell—whatever his private feelings may have been—bowed his head, as even dictators have to do, to public opinion. To his Ironsides Corfe Castle was another Bastille.

Corfe was the scene of the brutal murder of King Edward, in 978, by his stepmother, Elfrida. Criminologists affirm that murderers soon grow callous. They may suffer qualms when the first victim dies, with the second comes a sadistic satisfaction and an ill founded faith that they can kill with impunity. Elfrida, the daughter of Ordgar, Earl of Devon, was a maiden so surpassingly beautiful that the fame of her loveliness reached King Edgar's ears. Mr Bond tells the tale in his *History of Corfe Castle*, published in 1883, but I shall retell it in my own words. Edgar sent one of his earls, Athelwold, to report upon her charms. Apparently, even in Saxon times, great kings had to rely upon second hand descriptions of ladies whom they hoped might share their thrones and beds. Henry VIII and Charles II carried on the old procedure. In this case, most unhappily, Athelwold fell desperately in love with Elfrida and married

her. He made a false report to his sovereign! Edgar determined to see the lady. Athelwold—what a super-film is here!—entreated his wife to disguise her charms. Instead, she used all the arts of that day to enhance them! The king was enmeshed. He saw to it that Athelwold was assassinated; then he married Elfrida, who bore him a son, Ethelred. Edgar died. The youthful king Edward, son of Edgar by his first wife, stood between Ethelred and the throne. The guide-book gives the end, not the beginning, of the tragedy. Corfe Castle was not yet built. Elfrida lived on or near the present site at Corvesgate. Edward happened to be hunting in the forest between Corfe and Wareham. He wished to see his half-brother, Ethelred. He was alone. Elfrida gripped opportunity. She commanded that a cup of wine should be offered him, before he dismounted from his horse. As the king raised the cup to his lips, he was treacherously stabbed. . . .

Elfrida, later on, attempted to expiate her crimes in the Abbey of Wherwell, in Hampshire, which she had founded. She slept at night on the bare ground without a pillow, wearing a hair shirt and mortifying her once lovely flesh with every kind of penance.

Did she rest in peace after her death?

I have presented the bare bones of a terrific tragedy. I suggest that Mr. Rafael Sabatini might clothe the skeleton with flesh. One cannot see the penitent Elfrida as a wholly bad woman. Ambition was her bane. A novelist, saturated with the spirit of the past, might resurrect her father, the Earl of Devon, and her first husband, Athelwold. Was Athelwold forced upon her? Did she loathe him? Was she a party to his murder?



In the local guide book is a copy of a manuscript plan of the castle by Ralph Treswell, drawn by him in 1586. What stood here when Edward was murdered may be left to the imagination of archæologists. When Treswell's plan was drawn the castle belonged to Sir Christopher Hatton. In 1634 it passed into the possession of the Bankes family. We are not told what Sir John Bankes, the Lord Chief Justice, paid for it. His wife held the castle against all assaults of the Roundheads for thirteen weeks . . . The historical part of the guide-book is admirably written, but my fellow pilgrims grudged the necessary sixpence to buy it. They bought the picture-postcards instead. It amused me to hang about, overhearing scraps of small talk.

"Oh, look, dear, what pretty baa lambs!"

"I could do with a cooler, I could."

"Must 'ave 'ad an earthquake here, I'd say."

"Don't you go near them old ruins, all of a topple they are."

"Why do we have to pay a tanner to get in here?"

Thoughtfully, the present owner, a Bankes of Kingston Lacy, has put up a notice disclaiming any responsibility if the ruins do topple over. Listening to the talk of trippers one wonders why they do not.

Before adventuring to this part of Purbeck, pilgrims would do well to read the *History of Corfe Castle* by Mr Bond, of Tyneham. Being a collector of legends, I carried away one which pleased me. The mutilated body of Edward the Martyr, found at the foot of the hill, was taken to the hut of a blind woman. At midnight, the room was filled with celestial light, and the woman's sight was miraculously restored. More, the body was hidden in

a well, discovered by another ray of heavenly light, and thereafter the well, known as St. Edward's Fountain, became famous for its healing waters.

In Corfe the curfew is still tolled each day from October to March.

## 3

Swanage, Hardy's Knollsea, has become a gay resort, but the old town is still beguiling, delightfully quaint. Out of the holiday season Swanage may be commended to the many who wish to explore Hardy's country. The children of Dorset are familiar with the nomenclature of a great novelist belittled by two masters of English prose: Henry James and George Moore. The latter spoke of him as a "clod hopper." Passing strange! Personally speaking, I rank William James higher than his brother; and, save by the few, the later novels of George Moore are not likely to be read ten years hence. *Esther Waters* and *Hail and Farewell* have an honoured place in my library. Clarissa is certain that a strip of moorland between Dorchester and Wareham ought to be renamed Egdon Heath, although Hardy before his death told me that he regarded his Egdon Heath as a composite photograph of many heaths.

St. Aldhelm's Head, near Swanage, is now spelt St. Alban's Head. A malison on these new-fangled spellings! Why confound St. Alban with St. Aldhelm? The former was born about A.D. 303; the latter, according to Butler, died in 709. St. Aldhelm, not St. Alban, was interested in stone. The saint was bishop of Sherborne, a writer in Latin (according to the Venerable Bede) of universal erudition.

Nobody knows anything about his Chapel. The guide-book mentions a tradition that it was erected by a sorrowing father who witnessed the drowning of his daughter and her bridegroom in A.D. 1140. Many a ship has foundered on the fanged reefs which protrude from this headland. Notable among these was the loss of the *Halsewell*, an East Indiaman, on New Year's Day, 1786, a Sunday. Charles Dickens was so moved by this terrible disaster that he introduced a vivid description of it into *The Long Voyage*.

*The Halsewell* struck on the rocks at a part of the shore where the cliff is of vast height, and rises almost perpendicular from its base. But at this particular spot, the foot of the cliff is excavated into a cavern of ten or twelve yards in depth, and of breadth equal to the length of a large ship. The sides of the cavern are so nearly upright as to be difficult of access, and the bottom is strewn with sharp and uneven rocks, which seem by some convulsion of the earth to have been detached from its roof.

The ship lay with her broadside opposite to the mouth of this cavern, with her whole length stretched almost from side to side of it. But when she struck, it was too dark for the unfortunate persons on board to discover the real magnitude of the danger, and the extreme horror of such a situation.

Eighty-two men, bruised and battered, gained the shore. One hundred and sixty-eight, including the women on board, went down when the ship broke up. The survivors were saved by a rope let down into the cavern.

Not far from St. Aldhelm's Head are the Tilly Whim caves, once a quarry. The guide-books furnish much interesting information about them.

The village of Worth was a rival of Swanage. In

the churchyard lies Benjamin Jesty, a farmer. Here is his epitaph:

Sacred to the memory of Benjamin Jesty of Downshay, who departed this life April 16th, 1816, aged 70 years. He was born at Yetminster in this county, and was an upright, honest man, particularly noted for having been the first person (known) that introduced the cowpox by inoculation, and who from his strength of mind made the experiment from the cow on his wife and two sons in the year 1774.

Mr. Jesty seems to have anticipated Jenner by three years. Was it strength or weakness of mind which made him try a perilous experiment on his wife and sons instead of on himself?

Traversing Purbeck, both east and west and north and south, I was struck by the bleak aspect of the heaths as contrasted with the rich arable land. I saw superb standing crops of wheat and oats.

## 4

I have borrowed from the Free Library at Bournemouth a book entitled *Dorsetshire Folk Lore*, by the late Mr. John Symonds Udal, with a "Fore-say" by the Dorset poet, the Rev. William Barnes. Strange to note that such a book was published by subscription. It is now—so the librarian tells me—comparatively rare. I hoped to find in this encyclopædia of ancient customs something about the brass emblems which may still be bought in curiosity shops. The late Sir Spenser Ponsonby Fane had a remarkable collection which he showed to me many years ago at

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Brympton. These "emblems" were attached to poles or halberds, and no two are alike. I have been staring at a brass hand, beautifully modelled, with a heart cut out of the centre. What does this mean? Mr. Udal says little about these significant tokens, but he tells us that "club-walking" is still a Whitsuntide amusement. He cites some of Barnes's verses. After a rollicking dinner the "walkers" took the road:

They went all out  
 In rank agean, an' walked about,  
 An' gi'ed zome parsh volk a call;  
 An' then went down to Narley Hall  
 An' had zome beer, an' danced between  
 The elem trees upon the green  
 An' down along the road they done  
 All sorts o' mad-cap things vor fun;  
 An' danced, a-pocken out their poles,  
 An' pushen bwoys down into holes,  
 An' Sammy Stubbs come out o' rank  
 An' kissed me up agean the bank,  
 A saucy chap, I ain't vor-gi'ed en  
 Not yet,—in short, I han't a-zeed en,  
 Zoo in the dusk ov evenen zome  
 Went back to drink, and zome went hwome.

Mr. Udal has much to say about the seasonal custom of Harvest Home. The supper, crowning the festival, included a grand rump of Old English beef. Barnes records what happened after supper:

An' zome did drink, an' laugh, an' roar,  
 An' lots o' tales they had in store,  
 O' things that happen'd years avore  
 To *they*, or volk they know'd.  
 An' zome did joke, an' zome did zing,

## THE ISLE OF PURBECK

An' meake the girt wold kitchen ring;  
Till uncle's cock wi' flappen wing  
Stratch'd out his neck an' crowed.

Mr. Udal mentions curious customs concerned with the right keeping of Good Friday which escaped my notice when I wrote *This Was England*. In Bingham's Melcome, a miniature loaf of bread was baked and then hung up by the fireside to prevent the bread of other bakings from turning sour, or "vinny." Gillyflower seed was sown at noon in the belief that the flowers would come up double. Potatoes "set" on that day will have an important influence on all the other "settings" of the season.

It is believed in Portland that finger nails must not be cut on Good Friday or you will suffer from tooth-ache throughout the year!

"Forfeits" was a popular game in Dorset. As children we played forfeits in Hampshire. "Here's a thing, and a very pretty thing. . . ." Evidently the Dorset players had good memories, because, under penalty of a forfeit, they had to repeat without taking breath long rigmaroles, some of them alliterative:

One old ox opening oysters;  
Two toads totally tired trying to trot to Tewkesbury;  
Three tame tigers taking tea;  
Four fat friars fishing for frogs;  
Five fairies finding fire-flies;  
Six soldiers shooting snipe;  
Seven salmon sailing in Solway;  
Eight elegant engineers eating excellent eggs;  
Nine nimble noblemen nibbling non-pareils \*

\* Apples.



## MY VAGABONDAGE

Ten tall tinkers tasting tamarinds,  
Eleven electors eating early endive,  
Twelve tremendous tale-bearers telling truth

A riot of imaginations very creditable to humble  
"volk "

### 5

Clarissa asked me what I knew about Kimmeridge clay, and I replied that the Kimmeridge Ledges in Kimmeridge Bay had been engrossing my attention, reefs dear to the wreckers, accursed by the underwriters, particularly dangerous in calms and fogs to sailing vessels at the mercy of treacherous currents. In Henry VIII's reign, the Abbot of Cerne, leasing the manor of Kimmeridge for a term of years made a special reservation of wreck of the sea, the taking of which was a privilege conferred by royal grants! What a goodly profit even holy men made out of the misfortunes of others!

I had not heard of Kimmeridge clay, a fat black shale found also at Lulworth. In this clay is embedded what is known as "Kimmeridge coal money" small circular discs and cones of a hard black, worked with mouldings and perforated. Apparently, these discs are the refuse or ornamental objects now made (if made at all) of jet. Does any lady wear jet, or bog oak beads? However, such ornaments, annular bracelets and the like, appear to have been fashionable in Romano British times. Kimmeridge shale was exported to Paris, where a French Company extracted lamp oil and candle grease. Charcoal appears to have been made from it. In this clay was found the remains of

the Jurassic crocodile, *Goniopholis*. Geologists tell us that the presence of oyster beds indicates that much of Purbeck lay, in prehistoric times, beneath the sea. Under the barren heaths lies a china clay.

On January 17, 1881, I recall a terrific snowstorm. At the house in Dorset where I was a guest, the coal supply gave out. We were snowed in for nearly a fortnight; the roads were impassable. As a young man I formed one of what our host named "The Grand Victualling Expedition." Across the fields we dragged sleds to Sparkford, where we obtained coal and provisions. Near to Swanage on this occasion snow filled up the lanes to the top of the hedges. Flocks of sheep were buried alive—and remained alive! Men probed for them with sticks. Very few were lost. Mr. Robinson records that a steamer had to be sent round from Poole with flour to feed Swanage.

The Isle of Purbeck has in common with the less-known parts of Wales, innumerable small manor houses belonging to squires with long pedigrees. I beheld them sadly, noting signs of impoverishment. Who will occupy these houses which have weathered the storm of centuries when equality of income is imposed upon us? The stately homes may be turned into public institutions, but if every man Jack is deemed passing rich with four hundred a year, these manor houses will become ruins.

Mr. Robinson mentions "one of the sights of Swanage," the prison-house. This dreary dungeon, "unlit by the light of heaven," was calculated to strike amazement into the beholder by reason of its vast proportions, twelve feet by eight! And this sentiment, so rarely inspired by prisons,

was apt to find vent in a burst of laughter, when, after much difficulty, this mouldering inscription could be spelled out

Erected for the Prevention  
Of Wickedness and Vice  
By the Friends of Religion and Good Order

Significantly, this Newgate of Purbeck was large enough when the quarrymen were too busy to get into mischief. Why is it that workers in stone, throughout the ages, are law abiding folk? If our Spiritualists could summon Hiram from the Other Side, he, as the Grand Master Mason, might satisfy our curiosity.

The Purbeck Marblers, according to Hutchins, whose county history is not dull, were formed into a guild. Mr Udal gives an amusing account of "kicking the ball" from Corfe Castle to Swanage on Shrove Tuesday. Prior to this the 'freeboys' claim and take up their freedom under terms of a charter bearing the date 1551. If no freeman has married since the previous Shrove Tuesday, the old ball is used. The most recently married man kicked the ball. Mr Udal ends up, comically, "In these degenerate days it is carried, not kicked, to its destination."

## 6

I passed a memorable day at Studland, approaching it from Sandbanks, crossing by ferry the narrow entrance to Poole Harbour. When a bridge spans this strait, Stud

land as it is to-day will cease to be. As soon as the wayfarer leaves the ferry, he is likely to rub his eyes, thinking that he has been transported to Scotland. I saw such moors as may be found in Sutherland in August, and expected a covey of grouse to rise at my feet. Grouse ought to thrive here on the heather (which was in glorious bloom) but, for some mysterious reason, they do not. No house was in sight. In a few minutes a little loch gladdened my eyes. All this, of course, is private property, certain to be enormously valuable in the near future. The easterly part of the Isle is still a warren, with the rabbits, apparently, in sole possession.

I lingered in the tiny church dedicated to St. Nicholas of Myra, the patron saint of sailors, who was born about A.D. 342. He is also the patron saint of parish clerks of the city of London. Hone says that in early life he was so disposed to ecclesiastical rule that, when an infant at the breast, he fasted on Wednesday and Friday! There is another legend about St. Nicholas which established him as the patron saint of boys. Three youths arrived at Myra and were done to death by an innkeeper who cut the young gentlemen into pieces, salted them, and intended to sell their remains as pickled pork. Nicholas had a vision of these proceedings and forthwith betook himself to the inn, where he reproached the landlord with his crime. The man confessed, entreating the bishop to pray to Heaven for his pardon. The saint besought forgiveness and the restoration of life for the children, whereupon the pickled bits in the barrel reunited themselves, and the reanimated youths leaped out of the brine-tub. In the famous Salisbury missal of 1534 is an engraving illustrating this miracle.

There appears to be a St Nicholas of Bari, and also one of Lyra, according to the *Encyclopædia Britannica*

In this gem of a church I saw two ancient hatchments, belonging, I take it, to the Bankes family. As a boy I remember staring at such odd memorials to the dead placed above the front doors of great mansions. Heraldically, they are called "funeral achievements."

One of the Norman arches has been exquisitely decorated, not unlike an arch at Glastonbury.

I wandered into the churchyard. Alas! St. Nicholas was impotent to save three young people who were drowned in the bay and buried here. By their grave, I saw a tiny tomb with an inscription: "Lived but one day only."

From the church there are two lanes leading to the bays. I descended one, returning by the other. The first is a miniature ravine with a brooklet meandering down it, delightfully wooded and impassable by car. This glen debouches upon the smaller bay. The sea was so calm that the white cliffs of Old Harry's headland were reflected in translucently clear water. Wavelets rippled over the sand. I sat down under the shade of a tree, watching a few children who were throwing bread to the gulls. Some of the birds, possibly this year's brood, were indeed rappers up, mewing disappointment when they swooped and missed the tidbits. The older birds never

passed a memo-  
with and banks, cross-  
erly and bigger bay can be reached  
and Harbour. When the shore. Here I saw many visitors,  
at a notice forbidding would be

bathers to disrobe *coram publico*. I'm not a Peeping Tom, but my own eyes satisfied me that this ordinance is honoured in its breach.

On this more popular beach, I had a gossip with a fisherman, something of a personality, with a pair of laughing, love-in-a-mist eyes twinkling out of a weather-beaten, clean-shaven face. I asked him if he could give a name to the patron saint of smugglers. He could not. I established contact with the remark that I had a soft spot in my heart for these jolly offenders against the law. Evil be to him who evil thinks, but I should not fall dead of surprise if a tell-tale tit whispered to me that this grand old man of the sea had, in his time, found something more than lobsters in his pots. But not, decidedly not, cocaine—said to be smuggled to-day across the Straits of Dover. Even the revenue officers of a hundred years ago dealt discreetly with friends and neighbours. A story comes from Swanage, or thereabouts. A mounted coastguardsman perceived some fishermen bringing ashore a cargo not of fish. He fired his musket. The fishermen surrendered unconditionally. The revenue officer addressed them: "What you have in your boat cannot be landed here." They grinned, rowed away, and landed what they had elsewhere.

I shall never forget this happy, perfect day spent in an unspoiled corner of Purbeck. It is true that I gave board and lodging to harvest bugs. Zam-Buk dealt with them; but I shall remember this village which is not a village as long as I live. One of the guide-books said happily: "It has neither beginning, middle, nor end." The same can be said of certain up-to-date novels; but Studland is a law unto itself. You have to play hide-and-

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seek with it. Mr Robinson says "Picnic there" He offers sound advice He might have added "Go there on a summer's day" The heart of this mediæval village, one, mark you, of the oldest hamlets in the kingdom, may be the site of the Holy Cross (now no more) Or, possibly, the church is the radiating centre The thatched cottages are few and far between The manor house is captivating, near the road, as it ought to be What bungalows there are do not obtrude themselves The 'Banks Arms' offers rest and refreshment to man and beast I tried (in vain) to find a cottage where a smuggler of silks was murdered When seen from the sea this cottage appeared to be always in flames until the rector of the parish was summoned to exorcise the demon of fire with bell, candle and book.

The Spanish Armada passed by Studland

The Agglestone, an easy walk from Studland, perched upon a conical hill, is mentioned in all guide-books The legend concerning it varies Satan, it is affirmed, was *sitting upon the Needles Rock in the Isle of Wight*, when he espied Corfe Castle in the distance He took his cap from his head and hurled it across the sea intending to <sup>re-</sup>polish that Bastille of Purbeck The missile fell short <sup>ov-</sup>is mark, embedding itself on Studland Heath, where, as <sup>wa-</sup>Udale well says, it remains "a monument of disappointed <sup>gul-</sup>te, a wonder to the peasantry, and a theme of anti <sup>indi-</sup>an conjecture' It weighs about four hundred tons! <sup>swo-</sup>her legerd has it that his Satanic Majesty had no fell <sup>mis-</sup>ns on a fortress which might have been deemed a <sup>ass-</sup>ession indisputably his own His mark was the spire with <sup>is-</sup>bury Cathedral The latter legend is the more and <sup>re-</sup>c.

A fortnight afterwards I went to Abbotsbury to visit the swannery and St. Catherine's Chapel. St. Catherine of Alexandria, the patron saint of spinsters, had the power (what a responsibility!) of finding husbands for those who sought her aid.

St. Catherine, St. Catherine,  
O lend me thine aid,  
And grant that I never  
May die an old maid.  
A husband, St. Catherine,  
A *good* one, St. Catherine,  
But ar-a-one better  
Than nar-a-one, Catherine.

Or:

Sweet St. Catherine,  
A husband, St. Catherine,  
Handsome, St. Catherine,  
Rich, St. Catherine,  
*Soon*, St. Catherine.

The tithe barn, belonging to Lord Ilchester, is magnificent; his tropical garden is famous, his swannery holds over a thousand of these royal birds in the nesting season. I believed till recently, as many others do, that all swans belonged either to the king or to Lord Ilchester. It was termed a "Bird Royal" because no subject could own a swan without a licence and, by a law not, I think, repealed, these swans had to bear on the bill a distinguishing mark of ownership. Again, the licence to own swans was only

laid these eggs, which are indeed concentric coats of carbonate of lime formed round some tiny nucleus. Probably this is common knowledge to the pupils in our high schools, it was not common knowledge to my contemporaries at Harrow, and I doubt if that prig, Macaulay's schoolboy, had even a smattering of geology. The courteous manager of the Bath and Portland Stone Firms further enlightened my ignorance by another astounding statement: the massive block of oolite (pronounced "ô-ô-lit") at which I was looking, weighing several tons, had been liquid some few millions of years ago. As liquid it percolated into pockets where it is found to-day. Good glass has a ring to it, bad glass gives out a dull, muffled sound. The same applies to stone. The harder it is, purged of all moisture, the more tuneful the ring.

In the days of Ralph Allen, the stones which that enterprising gentleman quarried on Combe Down and sent all over the world came from outcrops. Eventually these outcrops were exhausted, and quarrymen had to look for stone which lay under, instead of on, the earth's surface. The boring of the famous Box tunnel—one and a half miles long and straight as a gun barrel—revealed masses of oolite about a hundred feet beneath the surface. It is not found here much lower than that. After the boring of the tunnel, adits were opened to follow the limestone beds into the heart of the downs. The Box Ground Quarry enters the hill on one side and passes through to the other, a distance of some three miles!

Before we ventured into this quarry, we were shown a huge map of the "workings," which looked to me like a gigantic map of England with the counties painted different colours. Nearly all these workings have been worked

## THE BOX QUARRY

out, but they still serve as store-houses for quarried stones not yet ready for the market, and for "wastage." There is an enormous amount of such wastage which at Portland is thrown into the sea. The question: "Are you sure that all this wastage has no value?" was answered at once: "None." Face to face with an expert who had devoted forty years of his life to the study of oolite, I held my tongue, but I recalled the refractory hæmatite ores deemed worthless till the Gilchrist-Thomas process for their reduction was discovered. I also recalled the huge dump-heaps near the Californian gold-mines, also reckoned to be valueless till the wit of man again devised a new process for extracting more gold out of them! I refuse to believe that these vast accumulations of "wastage" are rubbish. They would not be rubbish, even to-day, if the problem of cheaper transport could be met and solved. As it is, a few ardent lovers of rock-gardens buy small quantities, but, as I have found out for myself, these chunks of limestone are liable to disintegrate, if exposed to rain and frost, unless they are carefully laid as they lay in the quarry.

### 2

We were provided with acetylene lanterns, showing a naked flame. There is no danger in the quarries. During the past thirty years there has been only one fatal accident due to the fall of stone from a "ceiling," which crushed a skilled operative.

It happened to be a very hot day. I am glad that I put on an overcoat. The moment I entered the adit, I realized that the air, fresh enough, was piercingly cold. The

temperature in the workings remains constant at about 50° Fahrenheit. Between the coldest winter day and the hottest day in summer there is a difference of two degrees.

We followed the truck line. The tunnel was about eight feet high and a little broader. Had I known how slippery and slimy it was underfoot, I should have put on heavy, hob nailed boots. I wore, for my sins, rubber soled shoes, and in consequence had to mind my step.

Horses, not ponies, are used to drag the heavy trucks. I did not see them because stone was not being moved. They do not go blind.

We came at once upon disused workings where I saw huge blocks of stone in storage and masses of wastage. We had to walk nearly three quarters of a mile before we reached the first gang of quarrymen. I saw no vegetable growth except fungus. Some of the fungi were lovely, hanging like white, delicate flowers from the ceiling. They dissolved at a touch into moisture. Others, growing on the stone of the walls, were hard and tough as oak. In adjacent quarries the disused workings serve as mushroom beds.

To maintain a free circulation of fresh air, ventilating shafts have been driven down from the top. Our guide called my attention to an old well with a rusty chain still hanging in front of us. There was no bucket at the end of it. The water was about thirty feet lower down. Below the water no limestone is found, so the danger from flooding is almost negligible.

The silence and the sense of claustrophobia became more and more oppressive as we walked on. Finally, I could hear in the far distance the heartening sounds of men.

## THE BOX QUARRY

at work; the dull thud of the pick, the rasp of the hand-saws. In winter the quarrymen never see the glorious orb of day except on Sundays and holidays. They enter this subterranean world at seven in the morning; they leave it at five in the afternoon!

A quarryman who knows his job can earn between fifty shillings and three pounds a week. Monotonous though the work is, the men are long lived. I talked with the foreman of one gang who, entering the quarry when he was seventeen, had just completed fifty years of service. There are about one hundred men constantly at work in this quarry, nearly all of them middle-aged. It is difficult to find young men to take the place of the veterans; it is even more difficult to substitute a machine for a man. Still, the lot of a quarryman is happier than that of a miner. He can keep himself clean, for example; he can work standing upright; he is not imperilling his life; he is not subject to the autocracy of a trades union; the impending horror of the dole does not rob him of sound sleep o' nights.

No women work in stone quarries.

Oolite is sandwiched between harder stone, known as "bastard" or "rag-stone." No animal formations are in limestone. Wood, when found, is in the form of a dark brown powder.

As in coal-mines, wood is used for props. These props of varying thickness from six inches to fourteen inches in diameter, and of varying length, sustain greater weight and pressure if inserted at angles, not upright. They give warning when the pressure is too great. They moan! You may be sure that such moans are not disregarded by the quarrymen. Again, under too great weight the walls of the

innumerable tunnels may crack or disintegrate. We heard no protests from the props, but in one working, a man pointed out to the foreman this significant disintegration of what is called a 'pillar'. Had we had time to linger longer on this particular spot, we might have seen a prop placed *in situ*. We had not time.

## 3

The operatives work in gangs of four—the ganger and three men. One of these wields a sharp pick, two are sawyers. The picker is the first to attack the oolite as it lies in its bed. The "bastard" rock above it is so hard that he would break off the point of his pick, if he attacked that. He assails instead the softer limestone, sacrificing a few inches of it. The picker with whom I talked appeared to be a man of exceptional intelligence. He had not the brawny muscles of Longfellow's blacksmith, but he must be made of steel. I dared not try to wield his pick which was about four feet long and weighed some five pounds. I did lay my hand upon a saw, surprised to find that the sawing of Bath stone is less hard work than the sawing of oak timber.

How these huge masses of oolite are excavated from the quarry face is a miracle of patient and indefatigable craftsmanship. The picker picks out about nine inches of the top of the freestone, immediately under the ragstone course which is the roof of the workings. Long hand saws are then used to divide the stone vertically, and, finally, with the help of a hand-crane, bedded into the roof and floor of the tunnel, the stone is pulled out even as a dentist draws a

## THE BOX QUARRY

molar. Two men operate the crane, a third prizes up the stone with a big iron bar, and it emerges slowly from its bed. Three men move a block which may weigh seven tons! Meanwhile the roof above it must be tested with a hammer. If it gives off a dull, dead sound, the rock is safe; if it gives a hollow sound the larch props are needed. If cracks appear in the "ceiling," oak wedges are driven into the fissures, wedges which swell with the moisture and turn black.

The stone, as it comes from the quarry face, is squared up. The cranes lift these blocks and deposit them on the low trucks. Horses drag them through the tunnel to the surface dépôt, where other sawyers go to work. Finally the blocks, whether large or small, are stacked till they have shed their quarry sap and are weathered by the elements. Ultimately, perhaps after the lapse of several years, the skilled stonemasons get to work on them. In a reprint from the *Stone Trades Journal*, I read with pleasure that the demand for Bath stone is good, and that the quarries and works are busy, in spite of the general trade depression.

### 4

In the Box Quarry, the largest block of stone weighs about seven tons. It is, so I am told, cheaper to use stone rather than bricks for building purposes in and about Bath. All over the kingdom Bath stone is in demand, still beloved by architects, an uplifting fact.

What is distressing must be set down: the increasing shortage of quarrymen. I dare not dogmatize upon a



subject of which I know nothing, but here is a tang of humour which has something paradoxical about it. Tub thumpers at every street corner abuse the machine, insisting that the man is the more important of the two. Nobody disputes the hard fact that a machine is a labour saving device. Nobody to day is surprised to hear that men, especially young men, dislike to be treated as machines. A picker in a quarry is a machine. He is expected to pick away at hard stone and do nothing else. The choppers and sawyers have a less monotonous job, but they too are machines. The demand for stone from all quarries must in the near future exceed the supply. It is admitted that machinery could do this terribly hard work. Electrical power could do the picking and chopping and sawing. I gather that it doesn't pay to introduce such power at the present time, I hazard a guess that quarrymen do not want machines in the quarries. Nevertheless they cannot coax their sons to enter them.

## 5

What comes out of this quarry is called St. Aldhelm Box Ground Stone. John Aubrey, the Wiltshire antiquary of the seventeenth century, in his *Description of Wiltshire*, under the heading 'Haslebury' (Haslebury is in Box), makes the following note

Haslebury Quarre is not to be forgott, it is the eminentest free-stone quarre in the West of England Malmesbury, and all round the country of it. The old men's story is that St. Aldhelm riding over there, threwe downe his glove and bade them dig and they should find great treasure, meaning the quarre.

## THE BOX QUARRY

Alban Butler only mentions one St. Aldhelm, the Bishop of Sherborne, although the spelling of the name varies. The Saint believed in the virtues of cold water. It was his custom to recite the psalter at night plunged up to his neck in a pond. Perhaps he started the national habit of the matutinal cold tub—and sang in it.

St. Aldhelm built the Saxon church at Bradford-on-Avon, of which Professor Freeman speaks as "the one surviving old English church in the land." It is dedicated to St. Lawrence, with a nave twenty-four feet long and a chancel of thirteen feet. This church had been used as a cottage and a free school; it was restored in the last half of the nineteenth century. It looks like a cottage.

The lovely cloisters at Lacock Abbey were built of this Box oolite. So was Longleat; so was Lambeth Palace. Malmesbury Abbey has been restored with the same stone used centuries ago in its construction.

An architect tells me, enlightening my ignorance, that stone is a living thing in the sense that it lives or perishes under the right or wrong conditions. It may flourish best in the county where it is quarried. On the other hand, Portland stone and Bath stone appear to love the climate of London! St. Paul's Cathedral was built of Portland oolite. In a graveyard at Portland is a tombstone erected in 1777, which might have been fashioned twenty years ago. According to a pamphlet now on my desk it has withstood, almost miraculously, the buffetings of wind and weather in an exceptionally exposed position. Some of the houses in Lacock, built more than five hundred years ago, have a sprightly youthful appearance which would indicate that St. Aldhelm keeps them under his beneficent care.

Lean cites an unconvincing tag "the farther from stone, the better the church," which comes from the fen country, where rubble is used

There are indeed sermons in stones, and you cannot mislay them with impunity, as the jerry builders are finding out, and also the misguided many who employ them

## CHAPTER XV

### GOOD CREATURES

*Wine and Food Society—A Chuck-hole—A Luncheon in California—Salad—Some Recipes—A Sauce for Red Mullet—Sausages on the Honeymoon—Bombe à la Vachell—What to do With Tender Young Rabbit—Savoy Pheasant—The Patron Saint of Cooks*

#### I

THIS chapter may be skipped by readers who accept with humble and grateful hearts improperly cooked food. They get what they deserve. The punishment—dyspepsia, and every ailment which is rooted in dietetic errors—fits the crime. It is an offence against God and man to pay no attention to what nourishes body, mind and spirit. The man or woman, whoever he or she may be, who thinks that food, as a topic of conversation, is uninteresting must be something of a half-wit. Many accuse the epicure of being a glutton. A glutton demands quantity. He wolfs his food, even as a toper swills his drink. If such unfortunates possess palates, they have vitiated and atrophied them by abuse.

Better a crust of bread, a raw onion, a hunk of cheese and a glass of fair water than meals served by good plain cooks (self-styled) throughout the kingdom, meals exasperatingly the same regardless of the seasons, unappetizing, indigestible, spleen-provoking, dull and dreary beyond

description Small wonder that we refuse to talk about them

Being a member of the Wine and Food Society, I have been asked to write this chapter As a bait to those who read it, I shall offer a few recipes

I recall one memorable experience in the foothills of California, not far from that Garden City, San José My companion and I were on horseback, we had wandered far from a road deep in dust and full of chuck holes In those days, fifty years ago, chuck holes were deep enough to upset a buggy A pioneer, who had crossed the plains, told me that he was riding along a road when he saw a hat, a sombrero He dismounted to annex it Under it was a head Out of the head came a voice

‘ Say, pull me outer this darned hole.’

“Snakes alive! How did you get into it?”

“I rode in I guess my old bronk is dead ”

A fair specimen of transpontine humour

It was high noon and oppressively hot when my friend and I realized that we were saddle-weary, hungry, very thirsty and lost in a wilderness of bunch grass, sage brush, and chaparral, disconcertingly astray on a huge rancho

We espied, a few minutes later, a reek of smoke in the mid distance Within twenty minutes we found ourselves approaching what we took to be the homestead of a squatter, probably a Piker On the government land adjoining the Spanish ranchos, the “poor whites” took up claims and, as a rule, eked out a wretched existence However, we soon saw that the lord of this isolated domain was a man of initiative and energy, who had laid out a garden and planted a vineyard and orchard An adobe house crowned a knoll, a creek trickled through a small home pasture where cows

were grazing. Milch cows are rarely seen in a cattle country where, for the most part, milk comes out of tins.

A boy approached. He was astonishingly polite. He told us that his parents were French who spoke little English. He beamed when I replied that I could make myself understood in French. Would we give ourselves the trouble to put our horses into the barn and rest awhile?

Would we?

He was forking down some hay, when his father joined us, a big jolly fellow whose red, round, sun-tanned face might have belonged to Porthos. Madame, he assured us, would be enchanted to prepare a little breakfast. Yes; he had lived in these foothills for five-and-twenty years; and he had abandoned long ago any attempt to cope with the English language because that sacred word, *rheumatis-s-sma*, had been too big a mouthful. Also, name of a pig, he had been a martyr to asthma, but here, high above the choking mists of the Pacific, he could, the good God be praised, breathe and sleep. . . .

"You come, messieurs, from the big world; I am so happy in this small world of—of my own making. To each his taste."

Breakfast was served in an arbour; an omelette worthy of Madame Poulard *à l'année*: trout, a dish of tender peas, a broiled chicken with Romaine salad, and raspberries and cream. Perhaps the surprise of this unexpected banquet so deliciously cooked and served was a cool bottle of white wine. Our host had made the wine from grapes out of his own vineyard.

"A sunbeam from France," he murmured.

He had been born in the Bordelais country, not far from the famous château of Monsieur le Marquis de Lur-Saluces;

he had planted cuttings of the Sauvignon Blanc grape, but he assured us modestly that Sauterne, in all its golden glory, could not be made in California. He drank coffee with us, my companion, happily, was able to offer him a good cigar

## 2

The Spanish cooking in California, before the Gringo came, was excellent. I recall the stuffed chiles, the savoury guisado, and the chicken tamales. *Lack a-day!* I have eaten, or tried to eat, tamales made of sea gulls instead of chickens! Dyspepsia was unknown to the Hispano-Californians. It crossed the plains in "prairie schooners," it sailed round the Horn. When I left the Pacific Slope in 1898, nearly all the Americans of my acquaintance who were middle-aged, suffered more or less from what they termed elegantly—"stomach trouble." In San Francisco, certain restaurants, the *Maison Doree*, the *Poodle Dog*, and the *Pup* became famous for their good wine and food, but (generally speaking) in my time—1882 to 1898—the food gobbled too hastily by God's Own People was execrable. In the country hotels, a plate piled high with what was called "fresh" meat or pork and beans (pork from a pickle-barrel) was flanked with vegetables "on the side." A pert waitress slapped down these side dishes defiantly, as if to say "Complain, if you dare!" Once, when I did complain, I was chased out of the dining room by a fearsome female with a broom.

One of the worst meals of my life was eaten in the house of a multi millionaire. It was said of some of the Nob Hill

magnates that they over-iced their champagne and over-warmed their claret.

Had it not been for prohibition, Californian wines might have improved in quality, but—as Monsieur André Simon has pointed out recently—quantity triumphed. I remember a gold medal bestowed by incompetent judges upon a viticulturist who raised five tons of wine grapes to the acre. Do they gather one-and-a-half tons from an acre of Château Lafite?

They do not. It would seem as if that ardent lover, the sun, played Cophetua to the beggar maid (the slopes of the Médoc), as if he, the god, preferred to give all, or nearly all, to the poor hills, disdainful of the rich valleys. He disdains too, the made-up beauty. If I were a poet, I should write a sonnet on this theme.

If the Wine and Food Society, appealing as it does to the man in the street, should get a hearing, a gastronomic revolution might come to pass. Famous chefs should be accorded the accolade; a *cordons bleu* ought to be made a Dame of the Empire. If politics were practical, such honours would be bestowed.

Surely it is possible to roast and baste flesh and fowl mechanically? The turnspit dog has had his day; no kitchenmaid will expose her schoolgirl complexion to the ravages of an open grate. But I have been vouchsafed a vision of a leg of well-hung mutton or a Surrey capon slowly revolving before a blaze of radiant heat with dripping descending upon it continuously and—nobody in the kitchen! The joint would be weighed before it was placed on the spit. The lady of the larder would glance at a timetable. She would read that so much time, so much heat (easily regulated), would automatically roast to perfection



what was on the spit, she would adjust, also by rule of thumb, the basting machine, and sally forth to have a permanent wave!

Public opinion, if it made a sustained effort, might banish from our inns and minor hotels the pretentious bill of fare, beginning with ill prepared hors d'œuvres, going on to tasteless soup, fish fresh only from the fishmonger not from the sea, an entree that is a *réchauffé* of what is left over from a previous meal, a roast that is badly baked, an ice rarely made with cream, and a savoury past praying for. A few pious persons, hoping presumably that a miracle may be performed, mumble grace before such fare!

What Sydney Smith described as a green and glorious herbaceous treat, the salad, is wrecked in the mixing. The lettuce, if you deal with it yourself, is brought to you sodden with water, instead of crisply dry. If you ask for a spoonful of chopped chive and tarragon, you will be lucky if you get it. The oil comes from the cotton-seed, not the olive.

Apparently, the salad which is popular with the ordinary traveller is a mess up of lettuce, tomato, cucumber, radish, and thick slices of hard boiled egg! You are offered half a dozen flavours instead of one. Over this mixture, Mr Doe and Mrs Roe pour a generous libation of a bottled dressing.

Here is a recipe for a salad which any intelligent child can make, enough for four persons.

The lettuces fresh from the garden should be placed in water, the colder the better.

Take the yolks of two hard boiled eggs. Add slowly two tablespoonfuls of olive oil, stirring the while. Mix in pepper, salt, a dash of sugar, and one teaspoonful of

Worcester sauce. Add half a tablespoonful of lemon juice. The procedure is similar to the making of a mayonnaise sauce, and the result ought to produce a smooth creamy mixture. Stir in one teaspoonful of finely chopped chives and another teaspoonful of finely chopped tarragon. If you have neither chives nor tarragon in your herb garden, rub the salad bowl vigorously with half a raw onion.

Remove the outer leaves from the lettuce, and use the crisp core. Give these outer leaves to your pig, if you have one. He will like them. The leaves from the cores of the lettuce must be carefully dried.

Put them into the salad bowl, add the dressing, stir for at least two minutes, and serve as reasonably soon as possible. The same dressing, with or without the yolks of eggs, can be used with slices of cold new potatoes.

Tomatoes can be treated thus:

Cut into slices and allow them to soak for two hours in the following dressing. Two dessert-spoonfuls of olive oil and one of tarragon vinegar, pinch of salt and pepper, half a teaspoonful of very finely chopped onion, one teaspoonful of chopped parsley, the same of castor sugar. Blend well and pour the mixture over the slices of tomato. The only addition to this delicious salad, not easily come by, is a chopped-up green capsicum, not too peppery.

I am writing these lines in hot weather, so my fancy lingers upon cold dishes. Cold soups are delicious in the dog days, but a cold clear consommé ought not to be served up as jelly. It exacts careful treatment.

The following recipe is the best I know:

1½ pounds of English gravy beef,  
 Chop up two large onions and two carrots,  
 Pepper and salt,  
 Pinch of celery salt,  
 12 peppercorns,  
 12 cloves,  
 One bay leaf,  
 Fagot of thyme,  
 Four blades of mace,  
 Root ginger, size of large pea.

Mode: chop up meat in dice, eliminating all fat and gristle. Put the meat and the adjuncts as above into a large stew-pan, add three quarts of water, bring to the boil, and then simmer steadily for three hours till the soup is reduced from three quarts to one. Strain carefully through a damp linen cloth. Add one saltspoonful of gravy browning to give it a golden colour. Put it on ice. Before serving, add one glass of sherry. If these directions are observed, the soup will be liquid, not in jelly. Enough for four persons.

I append another recipe for cold tomato soup, a delicious whet to the appetite when the thermometer is at summer heat:

One pint of clear soup.  
 1½ pounds of tomatoes,  
 Salt and pepper,  
 Four blades of mace,  
 Five peppercorns,  
 Five cloves,  
 Root ginger, size of large pea,  
 Two lumps of sugar,  
 Small fagot of thyme,  
 Pinch of celery salt,  
 Slice of lean ham chopped fine.

Mode: simmer the above for a quarter of an hour. Strain through hair sieve. A metal sieve discolours the tomatoes. When cold, add two tablespoonfuls of cream, and put on ice for several hours before serving. Enough for four persons.

It is worth remembering that cold soups must be more highly spiced than hot soups.

Grape fruit is delicious if prepared some hours before it is served, a convenience to any cook. It looks messy if served in a bowl. Divide each grape fruit in half, and cut it in segments. Add powdered sugar and one teaspoonful of sherry or curaçao to each half. Place on ice. When served the fruit has absorbed the sugar and liqueur. An olive in the middle is not so pretty as a preserved cherry, but it makes a livelier appeal to a cultivated palate.

Frenchmen scoff at our savouries. Soft roes of herring, served on crisp toast, are excellent at breakfast, but, as a prelude to vintage port, abominable. In hot weather an iced *Bavaroise au Parmésan* will tickle a jaded palate. In cold weather, a recipe for the right treatment of Gruyère cheese, praised (I think) by Mr. Ambrose Heath, has commended itself to many of my guests. Here it is:

Cut Gruyère cheese into pieces about two inches long, one and a half inches wide and three-quarters of an inch thick. Egg, breadcrumb, and fry in boiling fat for not more than one quarter of a minute. The fritters ought to be a golden brown. They must be served immediately—and plenty of them. Time is the essence of this dish. If you fry the cheese a thought too long, it melts.

The *Bavaroise au Parmésan* demands the yolks of four eggs, half a pint of milk, two ounces of grated Parmesan, a dust of cayenne, salt, one gill of whipped cream, and a

quarter of an ounce of gelatine. Make a custard with the eggs and milk, add the cheese, gelatine, cayenne and salt. When nearly cold mix in the cream and place in a mould on ice. Sprinkle Parmesan cheese on the bavaroise when turned out of the mould.

## 3

Fruit salads are so good, if well made. I was invited to eat last week a compound of apple, orange, tinned peaches, angelica, dried cherries and what not, floating in a cloudy syrup which had come from the tin of peaches, served in August, with the chill off! At the moment strawberries, raspberries and bananas were for sale, cheap, in all the greengrocers' shops. Every fruit-salad should contain banana. It is necessary to make the syrup out of the best white sugar. When made, it should be clear as gin—and syrupy, neither too thick nor too thin. Let it get cold before you add the fruit. Muscat grapes skinned (with seeds removed) can be commended with small chunks of banana. Use fresh fruits. Big strawberries can be cut in half. Small peaches can be peeled and cut into quarters. Raspberries must not be too ripe, because they may discolour the syrup. Use no dried fruits. Don't stir the salad. Lastly, add one glass of Kirsch. Let it remain on ice for six hours at least before serving.

In hot weather, aspic jelly served with cold fish, chicken, or ham appeals both to eye and palate. Here in Bath we are proud of our Bath chaps, but—to do them full justice—they must be "binged up" in the cooking. Soak overnight in cold water. Boil the chap, allowing one quarter of an hour

to the pound. Stick cloves on the chap after covering it with Demarara sugar. Put it into a baking tin with half a bottle of stout. Bake in a hot oven. As soon as the sugar has browned and melted, baste with the stout. When cold, remove the cloves, and coat the chap with glaze. Serve with Cumberland Sauce.

Clarissa has given me the following recipe for what she stoutly swears is the best sauce for red mullet. Let them be served, as usual, in paper.

Into a gill of good stock put a little chopped mushroom, parsley, shallot, a teaspoonful of Harvey's Sauce, one bruised anchovy, pepper, salt, and one small glassful of port. Mix well, and boil for five minutes. Strain. Add two ounces of melted butter. Boil a little parsley (with a pinch of soda), chop it up finely and, when dry, place it at the bottom of a sauce-boat. Add the sauce and serve very hot.

This is decidedly a *sauce piquante*, a whet to appetite in hot weather, and an agreeable adjunct to the woodcock of the sea.

Clarissa is an epicure, although the least greedy woman of my acquaintance and the most free from faddishness. The unhappy fact that she cannot indulge in the fleshpots with impunity has made her more particular about quality. When I told her that parsons, doctors and schoolmasters were, in my humble opinion, the most important personages in the realm, and not yet honoured as such, she said slyly:

"I'm not sure that cooks ought not to rank even higher than your trinity."

Whereupon she told me this story. A young man married a typist and stenographer. After they were married, as soon as they found themselves alone in the small bungalow which was their home, the newly wedded wife assumed

a woebegone air. She had, so she said, a confession to make. It is possible that her husband became uneasy, believing himself to be "the first." At any rate, he tried to stay her tongue. Wisely, he kissed her, murmuring:

"To-day and to-morrow are ours, Doreen. To blazes with the yesterdays!"

"Yes, Horace, I—I know, but I ought to have told you before you married me. Your mother is such a good cook. My mother isn't a bad cook, but I—I know nothing of cooking."

"You must know something, baby."

"Absolutely—nothing. To-night"—her voice brightened—"we shall have a nice little supper, tinned soup, tinned salmon, and tinned pork and beans. Mother gave me some sausages for breakfast to-morrow morning. Darling, I don't know how to cook them."

"Tch! Easy enough! Chuck 'em into a frying pan and fry 'em like herrings."

"I do believe I can do that."

Next morning, the sausages were served.

"Doreen——"

"Yes, Horace?"

"Unless my eyesight is failing, you have cooked only the skins——"

"You said I was to cook them like herrings, so I took the roes out and threw them into the pig-bucket."

I recalled the Eton boy who, fifty years ago, fried sausages for his fag-master in marmalade, extenuating what he had done on the plea that marmalade, as the label on the pot stated, was an excellent substitute for butter!

My daughter insists that I should include an ice which she fondly believes to be a *spécialité de la maison*. But, unless my memory is at fault the recipe was given to me five and twenty years ago with the remark: "Any intelligent scullery maid can make it." I have made it myself on several occasions. Our own beloved lady of the larder laughed when I told her how my brother and myself dealt with a strawberry ice in California. Again, I should like to take credit for a labour-saving device, but the original idea came, I think, from a Californian lady with no time to waste. Instead of removing the stalks from the strawberries, a long and tedious business, we put the berries into a small machine for mashing potatoes. In a jiffy the good red juice poured out. We added cream and sugar, and put the mixture to freeze in an automatic freezer. In a semi-tropical country everybody eats ice-cream; so I hasten to add that our potato-mashing machine was not used to mash potatoes but kept sacrosanct to crush raspberries, strawberries and loganberries. We boasted that we could make an ice nearly as good as Gunter's in less than ten minutes. The freezer did its good work by itself.

Here is the recipe for the *Bombe à la Vachell*:

Flavour good rich cream with Maraschino and very little sugar. Freeze and turn into a mould. Make a *bombe*, and powder it with browned almonds, slightly sugared. Stick a few shredded almonds into the ice. Serve the *bombe* with a piping hot sauce of Maraschino cherries in their syrup. The bottle, uncorked, can be



placed in a saucepan of nearly boiling hot water We have noticed that men who respect their palates have now and again demanded a second helping of this ice! The ladies love it

An ice with a hot chocolate sauce is cloying to the palate A hot sauce, which I think I have commended elsewhere, served with a *bombe* similar to the above, can be made of hot melted red-currant jelly (home-made jelly is best) with brandied cherries dropped into it Few men can resist this, but there is not the same appeal to the eye, because brandied cherries are brown, not a brilliant red The melted jelly should be clear and liquid It looks more appetising when slightly thinned with boiling water

## 5

There are great possibilities hovering about a young tender rabbit A *mousse* of rabbit, with a flavouring of lean Bradenham ham, served either hot or cold with a *Béchamel* sauce, is good provaunt That benefactor of the *cuisine*, Mr Ambrose Heath, gave to a grateful world a recipe which we have tried again and again most successfully Here it is

Joint and fry a young rabbit in butter for about twenty minutes, when the pieces will be nicely browned Season, and add finely chopped onion Cook for a few more minutes Remove the pieces of rabbit and keep them hot Stir well into what is left in the frying pan three tablespoonfuls of cream Pour this over the rabbit, and serve with fried chopped parsley and potatoes in their jackets

A much more ambitious dish is Savoy Pheasant

Whether pheasants, rather tasteless birds, are thus glorified in Savoy or at the famous restaurant in London I cannot remember. The recipe was given to me some time ago.

Take five small onions and carrots and a stick of celery; cut them up into small pieces; fry well in butter, with a fagot of herbs, ten peppercorns and ten cloves. Add a quarter of a pound of butter. The pheasant is placed in a pan with a little good stock, and then basted indefatigably with the above sauce. Then, when cooked, it must be allowed to simmer gently for a few more minutes with a lid on the pan. Before serving, take the bird from the pan, boil up what is in the pan, adding a little well-browned flour to thicken the sauce. Strain the sauce and serve in a sauce-boat. Potato chips and bread sauce are the ordinary adjuncts, but instead of serving bread-crumbs, substitute fine-chopped salted almonds piping hot.

This is, perhaps, the moment to protest against other adjuncts too profusely offered with dishes quite sufficient unto themselves. Personally, I prefer a vegetable course, if you have a vegetable which lends itself to thoughtful and skilful treatment. The delicate flavour of a pheasant or partridge (not so flavoursome a bird as it was, *Consule Planco*) is lost if you serve with it brussels sprouts! I am doubtful, too, if a salad, however good, is to be commended as an addition to game. It is most welcome with all cold meats.

Why do otherwise kindly disposed persons refuse to give their best recipes to others? Let them reconcile such dog-in-the-mangerish abstention to their Christian consciences—if they can.

There has been lately some correspondence in the *Sunday Times* about dinners. Some wag suggested that there had been no absolutely perfect dinner since Adam and Eve were turned out of the Garden of Eden. That is as may be. Undeniably a perfect dinner would exact, apart from the right wine and food, the right setting, swift and deft service, the right appointments of the table and most important of all, the right company. One dismal Jimmy at the board would certainly rob the feast of the adjective "perfect." The host, giving of his best, would have to coax the best talk out of his guests.

Such a dinner could not be given in a restaurant. The famous octet dinners of a great doctor who did not inveigh against the Demon, Rum, limited the guests to a number less than the Muses but more than the Graces. A sextet can be commended when many wines are served, because one bottle fills, not to the brim, six wineglasses.

Ought the light to be concentrated on the table? Purists insist on that.

Should the talk be general?

However, perfect dinners are indeed so rare that we can leave them out of court. We owe an immense debt to King Edward VII, because he insisted that dinners at which he was present should not last for more than one hour. The dinners of Great White Queen, if you look at her bills of fare at the end of Francatelli's book, must have lasted for two hours!

Personally, I plump for a quartet of two lively, charming women and two men dining in a room large

enough to admit of perfect service, all four good friends, determined to avoid any controversial theme, each prepared to play his or her part in making the dinner memorable.

## 7

Who was the patron saint of cooks? I asked that question in *This Was England*, and long after the book was published a lady gave me the information. Alphonse Karr, it seems, tells the legend of Saint Zita in his *Promenades hors de mon Jardin*.—I shall not attempt a translation of his delightful prose, but tell the story in my own poor words. Zita was cook to some family living in Genoa whom she served well, having special aptitudes for her art; what we should call to-day a “cordon bleu.” Whether or not her skill was too great a temptation, we are not informed, but the fact obtrudes itself that her master and mistress refused to fast on the days appointed for such abstinence. This was a secret grief to Zita, a faithful servant to her God, naively conscious that her great gifts came from Him and were, apparently, taken by Satan (and used by him) to nourish bodies at the expense of souls. So unhappy was she that she observed all the fasts the more punctiliously, spending so much time on her knees that she began to neglect her duties. Finally, the day dawned when Zita was instructed to prepare a banquet for some important guests—no expense to be spared, the best of everything provided. Early in the morning of this celebration Zita hurried to her church, fell on her knees and remained in an ecstasy of prayer and supplication, heedless of the passage of time! She rose from her knees to discover that the hour

of the dinner was close at hand and the good food unprepared. She beseeched Omnipotence to help her, knowing that instant dismissal awaited her and the certainty that she would not find another place. As she entered her kitchen, savoury odours assailed her nostrils. Was it possible that her mistress had taken her place? The dinner was cooked and superbly cooked. Angels from Heaven had cooked it! Zita was vouchsafed a vision of their activities. Later on she was duly canonized by the Holy Father, and is to-day the Patron Saint of cooks.

*Another miracle which would lend itself charmingly to a presentment on the stage*

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE GOSPEL OF THE GRAPE

*Decanting Noble and Aged Wines—Terminology—The “Breathing” of Wine—Disappointments—Freak Wines—Old Brandy—Moving Old Wine—Rheingau Hocks—White Burgundies—Château Yquem—The Romance of Wine—Napoleon’s Madeira—Redding on Wines.*

It is extraordinary to any man who preaches the good gospel of the grape that even in the country-seats of the mighty, where, possibly, too much responsibility is thrust upon the butler, wine should be so maltreated. In palaces the right wine may be served with too rich food. The nobler red growths, in particular, exact sacrifices. If you must have mint sauce with lamb, use lemon juice, I pray you, but even then the mint overpowers a delicate palate. So does cigarette smoke. Too fragrant flowers on the dining-table, such as mimosa or lilies of the valley, are out of place. The bouquet of any fine wine loses its virtue, if you happen to sit next to a lady who has besprinkled her person too liberally with scent. A bank whereon the wild thyme blows is not the place to “déguster” a claret of famous vintage.

It may seem platitudinous to say that all old red wines need the most careful decanting. Many a man who prides himself upon his cellar believes that if you take a noble and aged claret or burgundy from its bin, place it on end for twenty-four hours, you can then decant it fearlessly. There is only one way. The lees of a prephylloxera red

justice to its colour and brilliancy Coloured glasses, once used for hocks and white wines, may be used if the wine has become slightly cloudy Better, too, a goblet half full than brimming over I recall an American host who was furious with a guest

'The darned fellow," he said rancorously, "smelt my wine before he drank it—insulting!"

I tried to explain that good wine should be smelt before it is sipped

## 2

The objective of the Wine and Food Society is to link together the heavenly twins The luncheons and dinners are informative, whether the many will profit by the experience of the few lies on the knees of the gods

Variety in wine and food is our slogan The reactionary will stick to his whisky and soda, his sons and daughters will appreciate sound wines if they are served in roadside inns at a reasonable price I have before me a wine list from a middle-class hotel, typical of wine lists throughout the kingdom From a long experience in stocking my own modest cellar, I know, without any doubt whatever, that the prices in this list are preposterously exorbitant. Roughly speaking, the management charges double what it pays for wines, spirits, and liqueurs The turn over would be immense, if the general public paid such prices They do not Again, in this get rich quick age, wine is seldom bought by the cask, bottled, and allowed to mature in good cellarage A bottle of claret costing two shillings is listed at four shillings If the same wine could be offered for half a crown, the public would soon want to drink it The

managers of these hotels don't think so. They plead in extenuation of usurious charges for liquid refreshment their overhead costs. These could be cut down. Good lodging is no advertisement if the board is bad. The smaller inns, with negligible overhead charges, have to-day an opportunity which may never occur again. In our High Schools cookery is being taught. Girls with aptitudes are quick to learn, but, after talk with these young ladies, I was distressed to be told that they wanted to teach the culinary art. Can they expect to make a living as teachers? They could demand and get good wages in our country inns. If they supplied palatable food, demand for it would follow.

There is an odious snobbery about the second-rate hotels which calls for plain speaking. Recently, I arrived late in the evening at a popular resort on our south coast. One big hotel faced the sea. The mackerel were in the bay. The fish served at dinner was Canadian salmon. I asked the manager why fresh mackerel was not served instead. His answer did not surprise me.

"Because the children are hawking 'em about—three a penny."

Gooseberries being also cheap, we were not offered them, for, I presume, the same reason. At this hotel the management had the effrontery to charge five shillings for a bottle of Graves! So I contented myself with the wine of the country—cyder.

Two facts stick out of this disintegrating experience. Being alone, I amused myself by observing my fellow-countrymen, trippers, for the most part, out for a good time. Apparently they had it! The men, at any rate, honestly believed that they were dining well and in style; they hadn't the remotest idea that the food they were gobbling had been



spoiled in the cooking. Was it better than what they have at home? The second fact was their blissful ignorance that they were courting indigestion. Instead of the winter dessert of apples, oranges and bananas, bicarbonate of soda should have been handed round.

Confronted by this ignorance of what food ought to be, the managers of pretentious hotels will go on giving the public what it accepts without complaint. A manager said to me with a derisive smile "I'm paid to feed our customers, not to educate them."

That beloved vagabond, the late W. J. Locke, who loved the untrodden ways of France even as I did, made out with me some gastronomical itineraries, inexpensive little tours. Twenty years have drifted by. Such pilgrimages are possible to day in the Midi, Touraine and Provence, but a Frenchman told me a few weeks ago that Americans and English travellers had unwittingly lowered the standard of *la bonne cuisine bourgeoise*. The French *patron* of small provincial hotels studies economy. He, too, gives the "Angliche" what satisfies him, and shrugs his shoulders!

## 3

I should not dare to dogmatize upon the right sequence of wines. There is fun in cautious experiment. With *bortsch*, for instance, or a *bisque d'écrevisses*, the palate is temporarily vitiated. If you pile Pelion upon Ossa and offer your guests a wine able to hold its own, such as Madeira, you ought perhaps to end the banquet there and then. Fortunately, champagne can be drunk, and is drunk, throughout certain dinners where an exquisite hock, claret

or burgundy would be criminally out of place. The rule of thumb is this: let your wines succeed each other harmoniously, keeping the best to the last. Too often the last is not the best. The connoisseur selects his wines before he orders the food. The simpler that food, the better. Clear soup, a grilled sole, a saddle of mutton, and a Brie cheese would not imperil the ethers of a Montrachet, followed by a perfect claret or burgundy. Curiously enough, greasy food, such as foie-gras, is not palate-vitiating. The dishes that are tabu are those which have a piquant acidity. A goose is a good companion to a first-growth red wine, if you can eat it without the strong sage and onion stuffing.

## 4

Wine has a terminology of its own; but even the layman can understand the meaning of such adjectives as "vinous," "breed," "elegance" and so forth. But when a connoisseur tells the uninitiated that an aged wine must "breathe," after decanting, the neophyte may be puzzled. It is true, alas, that the authorities are not as yet unanimous upon this important matter. An aged port, when the bottled sunshine is released, may have a slight "fungusy" odour and taste. If the stopper is left out of the decanter for a few hours between breakfast and dinner, this passes off. Again and again, I have said that an aged port seemed to be better, more velvety, upon the second day. This does not apply to aged clarets and burgundies. Pre-phylloxera claret looks like ink and loses all its ethers twenty-four hours after decanting. It should be drunk to the last inspiring drop at a sitting. The *vin ordinaire* is not so

disastrously affected. Logically, therefore, it would seem that the breathing space must be regulated according to the age of the wine. I have never been present when an exquisitely embalmed mummy was unwrapped, but I am credibly informed that the "freshness" of the skin when exposed to the air is astounding<sup>1</sup>. And then, within a short space of time, disintegration sets in. The subtile ethers of a noble and aged claret or burgundy haste away too soon. On the other hand, it is my experience—although I refuse to lay down the law about it—that these same ethers are enhanced within half an hour of decanting. I can cite a convincing experience. I was lunching with a host who gave us an excellent claret of 1911. So good was it that his guests exceeded their ration. Our host ordered another bottle. Probably it was taken from the cellar and too hastily decanted. One outspoken gentleman declared that we were now drinking another claret. I shared his opinion, but was too discreet to say so. The butler assumed an injured expression and forthwith produced the bottle. Half an hour later, we all agreed that the third bottle was quite as good as the two first. It had "breathed."

Many a Frenchman has given me his best claret with the cellar chill on it! One can only say "Better too cold than unduly warmed." It is sacrilege to plunge a great wine into hot water or to put the decanter near a fire. But I have found, under the stress of emergency, when an unexpected guest has driven me to my cellar half an hour before a meal, that an aged claret, after decanting it horizontally, may be placed for ten minutes in very luke-warm water with comparative impunity. The water should approximate to the temperature of the hand. The decanter is placed in the water unstoppered. On the other hand,

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there are cellars so uniform in maintaining the right temperature all the year round that this baptism with ice-water is unnecessary. Probably, the noble cellars of the Château Lafite achieve such perfection.

### 5

Collectors of good wine must expect disappointment. On the advice of a reputable wine-merchant, I ~~lay~~ laid down a bin of wine likely to mature in ten years' time. When laid down, it is not fit to drink (especially in the case of burgundies), crude, vinous, and too robust. The day comes when you decant the first bottle. It is, perhaps, disappointing. Another bottle taken from another bin, a burgundy of the same year, may surpass expectation. I am noticing, to-day, an enormous difference between the burgundies of 1923. Some have added cubits to their stature; others are not so good as they ought to be. There is a remarkable difference between the four first growths of the 1920 clarets. The Château Latour seems to me to soar high above the Margaux and Lafite; and I notice that it is quoted in the current wine lists at a higher price.

Freak wines may be described as prize parcels out of the lucky bag. How many connoisseurs foresaw that a Château Ausone of 1914 would command the price demanded for it to-day?

Since I began, years ago, to write (humbly, I hope) about wine and food, my letter-bag has been disconcertingly heavier. Kindly and grateful correspondents ask questions which their own wine-merchant could answer. One gentleman wanted to know why I commended a 1905

brandy bottled last year? Apparently he was unaware that brandy of the purest quality and of a good vintage year achieves perfection in the cask and improves but very slightly in bottle. I have sipped Napoleon brandy which must have been bottled nearly a century ago. It came from the cellar of a multi millionaire, it was given to me. Nevertheless, I looked with misgiving at this gift. How long, I wondered, had it matured in cask? A guest, probably the finest judge of such nectar in the kingdom, preferred the 1906. As a test, I had poured a libation of each into two large goblet shaped glasses, he did not see the bottles.

Accordingly, I would say to any man of moderate means who wishes to offer to his guests the best old brandy which he can afford "Fight shy of labels!" More, cultivate a taste for pure brandy. A bottle of the best ought to be in every medicine cupboard.

The lover of claret can buy cases of wine, château bottled, from a grocer, and be reasonably assured that he is getting value for his money, if he selects wine of a good year. The buying of burgundy, here, there and anywhere, is another matter and too often a bad investment unless you deal with wine-merchants of outstanding reputation. Buying any wine cheap at sales is a dip into the lucky bag, unless again you know where the wine comes from and whether or not it has lain in a good cellar. Moving old wine is a risk. I can cite a personal experience not without its humours. A friend bought at a sale some twenty years ago a few bottles of 1863 port. These were duly binned in his cellar and allowed to rest, but not long enough. I happened to be his guest when he decanted the first bottle. We could not drink it with any pleasure. Thinking that

we had hit upon a bad bottle, we tried another. Disappointed once more, my host said to me: "The rest of the parcel goes down the sink." Fortunately, I protested. Whereupon he said acrimoniously: "If you like this muck, you can have half a dozen of it." He sent me six bottles. I decanted one after six months' rest. I couldn't drink it. What happened next is food for thought. I forgot this wine. It reposed peacefully in my cellar for two or three years. And then, as an experiment, I decanted another bottle. The wine was brilliantly clear and in perfect condition. The remaining four bottles were equally good.

## 6

I have been asked to write something about hocks, moselle, and other white wines, not excluding the great and glorious Château Yquem. The magnificent Rheingau hocks are hard indeed to come by and prohibitively expensive. I am told that Queen Victoria was given as a wedding present one dozen only of the finest hock then in existence taken from the cellars of an emperor. She was also given a few bottles of the incomparable "Essence" of Imperial Tokay, the Azubor. What Her Majesty thought of the wine, I do not know. Probably the Prince Consort appreciated the splendour of the gift. . . .

Before the war rich Germans thought nothing of paying five pounds a bottle for a great hock. Since the war some of these rarer wines have been offered by our wine-merchants. During the war, H. B. Irving was lunching with me at a famous club. I asked him what he would like to

drink on a hot summer's day "We might," he suggested, "cool ourselves off with a sound hock." To the surprise of both of us, the wine waiter (something of an enthusiast) said deprecatingly that the members were not now drinking Hun wine! Again to our surprise we found a Rheingau hock, of 1893, at a fairly modest price. We drank that noble wine with full appreciation of its tonic quality, its fragrance, and its incomparable "elegance." There were only nine bottles left. I offered to buy the little lot. The wine waiter said reproachfully "You know, sir, that you can't buy wine out of our cellars and take it away." I reassured him. I pledged myself to drink that hock in the club dining room—and I did.

Cheap hock and moselle may be made into cup, using dry sparkling cyder instead of soda water. They are little more than beverages, disagreeably dry and acid. No "bite o' the gob," as Mr Jorrocks might say of them. A great hock has in it the sweetness of the grape which has ripened beneath the kisses of the glorious orb of day.

All great wines are long-lived, even champagne, but the moselles of an ordinary year soon lose their freshness and brilliancy, as I have found to my chagrin. Doctors commend a light moselle, even as they prescribe for gouty patients whisky and water, but is any wine really wholesome *if you do not like it*? I believe that the many suffer from dyspepsia, not because they eat indigestible food, but because it is unpalatable. A famous doctor said to his patients "If you must drink wine, drink what you like best." Sound advice.

One of the many reasons why the best hock is so expensive, apart from the very limited output, may be set down. The Reising grape must be left on the vine till

the last possible moment. And then rain may ruin it. The making of a great hock is a big gamble with the Clerk of the Weather. Out of one small vineyard, the grapes gathered at the right moment may fill in time a few precious casks. The rest of the crop, gathered a day or two later, are made into wine which is sold for what it will fetch in the world's market. Long ago, I asked a friend of mine, on his way to shoot with a German magnate famous for the hocks in his cellar, to find out, if he could, where I could buy at a reasonable price a noteworthy hock. On his return, he grinned at me: "I asked my host your question," he said, "and he told me that if he could answer it, he would buy the sort of hock you want for himself."

Now—for reasons unknown to me—noble hocks are procurable in England, but at what a price!

I have asked friends more knowledgeable than myself, when a great hock should be served. Expert opinion differs confoundingly. One high authority said: "If you could offer me Steinberg Cabinet of 1868, still in perfect condition, I should ask for two glasses, no more, to be sipped, with a dry biscuit, at eleven in the morning." Nearly all these experts agreed that the finest hock should be drunk sparingly. It is also more or less agreed that such a wine is so great that, whenever served, it imperils any other wine that may succeed it.

## 7

The famous white wines of the Côte d'Or are also hard to procure, although you find them on every wine list. The best Chablis and Montrachet are almost too good to be true. They can and do precede the red growths made



from the same grape, the Pinot. But, only the other day, at an "educational" luncheon, a magnificent Chassagne Montrachet overpowered the palate for the "degustation" of a delicate Romanée Conti.

But these difficulties of selection merely serve to whet the ardour of the honest gourmet and provoke amusing and instructive talk. To the man in the-street, I would say "Buy the wine which pleases you from any wine-merchant of good standing" A duke once asked a curate if he liked the wine at the ducal table The curate said nervously "It is very good, your Grace" Whereupon His Grace roared back "I didn't ask you if my wine was good, I asked you if you liked it." I crave pardon if I have told this true story elsewhere It was told, I remember, by my friend, the late G W E Russell, in his delightful *Collections and Recollections*

The sweeter white wines of France are becoming increasingly dear to the ladies I have a joke against Clarissa I asked her which white wine she fancied She replied 'Cheval Blanc,' which is a red wine

A golden Barsac, slightly iced, is delicious in hot weather French people drink such alluring wine with impunity English people appear to swig down with equal impunity soft drinks with more sugar in them, and all the different 'cups'

What an unreasonable world it is!

Château Yquem is, perhaps, in a class by itself Does the Marquis de Lur Saluces drink it in beakers? One glass, with a sweet, suffices me And one glass of the Azubor Tokay, so I m told, is the right ration for the lover of great wines Monsieur André Simon called my attention to a Château Yquem of 1847 which was dry That wine stands

out in my memory as unique, worthy to be compared with the Lafite of 1864, although so colossally different. Only yesterday I met at luncheon a young Swiss gentleman who told me that his grandfather had in his cellar an Alsatian wine nearly one hundred years old. Was it very sweet? I asked. Not at all. This surprised me. Was it palatable? The young man replied modestly: "I thought it perfectly delicious."

## 8

About twenty years ago, I signed an agreement with a famous publisher, pledging myself to deliver, if I could, a book dealing with the romance of wine. There and then I began collecting material, delving deep into old *mémoires* and histories. If I live to be a centenarian, that book may be printed. I soon discovered that the material I sought was not to be found in forgotten tomes. I hunted high and low for amusing anecdotes. Wine, admittedly, has played its part in great affairs of state, and in great love affairs (as Casanova naughtily testifies); it may have decided the fate of battles. If it is true that Napoleon carried aged Burgundy in the boot of his travelling carriage, if he drank it after the wine had been rattled about over rough roads, it is not surprising that his stomach was so troubled that he lost the battle of Waterloo! Perhaps then, he transferred his affections to Madeira. He bought a large parcel on his way to St. Helena. He did not pay for it. After his death, what was left of the Madeira—so I'm told—was retrieved by the firm who sold it. I have drunk this same wine, still in perfection, and was immediately transported to Longwood.

Curiously enough, although wine is mentioned by nearly every author, we are but rarely enlightened with names. Quantity, when the Three Musketeers were alive, prevailed over quality. I wish that I could resurrect the dead Athos and learn from his own lips what tippie he preferred. Porthos, I am sure, swigged and enjoyed all the *petits vins* of Touraine. Athos may have demanded nobler growths.

After the classification of clarets by Napoleon, the names of the famous châteaux became more or less familiar to the general public, but I can remember, as a boy, many gentlemen who laid down claret with nothing on the bottles save a seal. If you asked your host to name the wine, he might reply testily "That's the yellow seal." He trusted his wine merchant to supply the right article. To-day, port is laid down with nothing but a splash of whitewash on the bottle, but the name of the shipper and the vintage is generally (not always) branded on the cork.

Of the many books dealing with wine in my library—many have been published in recent years—I turn with affection to my *Redding on Wines*, published in 1833. The author dedicated his book to John Wilson, better known as Christopher North, who wrote the famous *Noctes Ambrosianæ*. A dinner with the late George Saintsbury would, I'm sure, have pleased me much more than a *nox ambrosiana* with Professor Wilson.

Redding gives the price of wines. Even in his day only Dives could afford the best. He speaks of White Hermitage as keeping without deterioration for a hundred years. Did that noble and puissant prince, the Marquess of Steyne, transport such nectar from his cellars at Stillbrook to tickle the palate of Becky Sharp?

Redding affirms that the custom of laying down wine on the birth of a child was a custom prevalent in ancient Rome. He speaks also of wine made here in England (at Pain's Hill?) which was sold at half a guinea a bottle! In 1811, the famous comet year, Prince Metternich's *Johannisberger*, as new wine, was sold to a favoured few for thirty-six pounds the ahm (thirty gallons). It is interesting to note that this superlative vineyard was once the property of the Church. There was a tag, current in Redding's day: "Rhein-wein, fein wein; Mosel-wein, unnosel wein." "Rhine wine is fine; Moselle is innocent."

Redding might have entitled his book *My Vagabondage*. He wandered all over Europe, tasting wines, good, bad and indifferent. What a delightful and informative pilgrimage! Apparently he visited Cyprus, and he asserts that the Cyprus wine which he drank must have been much the same in character and favour as the wine beloved by the ancient Greeks. I have in my cellar a bottle of Cyprus wine from the cellars of Lord Beaconsfield. I dare not open it. Dizzy loved Cyprus wine, but it is told of him that he preferred his champagne slightly warmed and iced his claret!

Redding was not concerned with the romance of the grape. Our diarists have been drawn blank by me. What red wine did Sir William Deloraine drink through the helmet barred? And how did he do it? Again and again the Wizard of the North, when he writes about wine, arouses an expectation which is not satisfied.

And so, very regretfully, I live in faint hope that a book dealing amusingly with the romance of wine will yet be written by a scribe with more leisure to do the subject more justice than I have.

## CHAPTER XVII

### TAUNTON AND THE QUANTOCKS

*The "Courts"—Unpleasant Originality—The Bloody Assize—The Court Room—A Curator—A Pre-historic Paddle—Walter Raymond—Coleridge—Wordsworth—Airy Ridges—Tangier—Tom Boilman—Hodson—Gibraltar—Somerset Dialect—A Haunted Stone—The Tarr Steps—Shepton Beauchamp—Egg-Shackling—Flowers as Weather Prophets—Scrambles—German Bands—The Quantocks—The Ancient Mariner—St Decuman—Florence Wyndham—Closing Lines*

#### I

A LOVER of unspoiled England might do worse than spend an autumn holiday in the Quantocks, establishing himself at Taunton, at first sight something of a disappointment: an amalgam of ancient and modern, architecturally a mixed grill. Hardly any church or old building remains as it was. Nevertheless, the pilgrim can hide himself in quaint corners and seek for what is swiftly passing away. At the moment, the nation has determined to wipe out slums. On arrival at Taunton I was told that the "courts" were doomed! Forthwith I expressed a wish to see these courts. There are a score at least, probably more. I should like to buy one, if I had the cash to put it in order and make it habitable. Sweet Sally might have lived in one of these alleys. You pass through a low archway and find yourself in a miniature quadrangle surrounded by small mean houses which I make no doubt are condemned by sanitary inspectors. On the other hand, an architect would find delightful

possibilities which have escaped the notice of those who wish to wipe them off the city map. They might be transmuted by such a man as Sir Edwin Lutyens into outstanding features, as attractive to visitors as Vicars' Close in Wells. Emile Cammaerts, the Belgian poet, opened our Exhibition of Fine Arts at the Pump Room in Bath. He made a significant remark: "Unpleasant originality," he submitted, "is better than pleasant conventionality." Most of us would agree with this accomplished gentleman, but what is unpleasant might be taken from originality without destroying it. In these courts are ill-kept gardens a-flutter with lines of washing, air-spaces of value to any community. I had a vision of these gardens laid down in velvety turf. Many of the houses are built of stone. I was told that it would be cheaper to restore than to pull them down and replace with new buildings. This may not be true. My informant was neither a builder nor contractor. Still, before wiping out what is unpleasant originality, an experiment might be made with one court. If that experiment succeeded, the City Fathers might then realize the advertising value of such a sanctuary, apart from its appeal to the home-seeker who—other things (such as rent) being equal—would prefer to escape from the din of the roaring thoroughfares. These courts offend both eye and nostril; they are indeed unpleasant to every æsthetic sense; but I was impressed by their restfulness. Some of the present tenants might be loth to leave them.

2

Winston Churchill's account of the "Bloody Assize" lured me to Taunton. It is still red in the memories of all

who live within a twenty mile radius of Sedgmoor I talked with a parson, not a West Countryman, who has been a vicar of a small parish near Taunton for thirty five years. He assured me that the sympathy of his parishioners is with Monmouth, the champion of Protestantism, he affirmed—and I am sure that he was making no attempt to *grind his own axe*—that the savageries of Jeffreys and Kirke would react to day against the establishment, let us say, of a Roman Catholic college or seminary in or near Taunton. That is as it may be, but the evil wrought by Jeffreys exercises repercussions after two hundred and fifty years . . .

I was fortunate enough to meet the curator of the museum when I stood in the great hall where this detested judge, "flown with insolence and wine," held his assize. He made me see this huge room as it was, not so huge then as now. The Tudor windows remain. The oval windows on the right, which seem out of place, illuminated what was once a long corridor. The ceiling, too low for such a room, has been removed, revealing the roof supported by stout oak beams. Before this room became a museum, rich in so much that pertains to the lake villages near Glastonbury, it was used as a ballroom! I could see Victorians dancing the polka! Did they give a thought to the fair maids who embroidered Monmouth's banner? Let us hope they didn't. But I should not like to dance in this room of dreadful memories.

The curator, an enthusiast, was much excited over two "finds." He introduced to me a young man who had brought to the museum that day a prehistoric paddle, such as was used to propel coracles, and the most perfect flint arrowhead I had ever seen, both (I think) found near

Christchurch in Hampshire. Not being an archaeologist, I have to confess that I was more interested in these two men than in the paddle and arrowhead. It is so heartening to meet anybody nowadays who can utter the word which reconciles ancient and modern, who out of highly specialized knowledge can resurrect the past. I had met at luncheon one of our empire-builders. In the evening of his life, he is devoting his energies to the collecting and right arrangement of parish documents. He showed me a muniment room, perfect in construction and equipment. His eyes twinkled when he told me that the quantity of these documents (till recently ill cared for in country parishes) had overwhelmed him. He had persuaded a country parson to transfer the custody of his ancient records. Sixty-seven sacks, piled high in a lorry, were delivered in Taunton! Only the contents of three of these sacks had been card-indexed and filed away. This collecting of records invaluable to the historian has its humours. A former custodian spoke of the parchments in his trusteeship as "so useful for making lampshades."

I had little time for browsing in the libraries, but it pleased me to find a shelf with the works of the late Walter Raymond, books bearing evidence of constant use. He is the Thomas Hardy of Somerset, described by Sidney Smith, no mean judge, as the finest county in England. This witty divine had lived in Yorkshire. He was appointed Prebendary of Bristol and rector of Combe-Florey (near Taunton), where he died and was buried. The curator, who knew Raymond, said that he began to write in a cottage for which he paid one shilling a week rent. Coleridge paid but seven pounds a year for his cottage, wherein he wrote *The Ancient Mariner*. His friend Wordsworth, in 1797, took



(or was given the use of) a house at Alfoxden where he wrote his *Lyrical Ballads*, hardly to be described as ballads or lyrical, which provoked the lively lines from Byron:

Thus, when he tells the tale of Betty Foy  
The idiot mother of "an idiot boy",  
A moon struck silly lad who lost his way,  
And, like his bard, confounded night with day,  
So close on each pathetic part he dwells,  
And each adventure so sublimely tells,  
That all who view the "Idiot in his glory,"  
Conceive the bard the hero of the story

Clarissa has scolded me for inserting what belittles the noble author of *The Excursion*, but I pleaded in excuse my urge to set down (1) that a poet cannot expect appreciation from a brother poet and (2) that he ought not to be scarified by parody of his worst work. Clarissa suggested that she would accept as valid my excuse, if I quoted the lines written by Wordsworth about this too brief visit to Somerset

That summer under whose indulgent skies  
Upon smooth Quantocks airy ridge we roved  
Unchecked, or loitered 'mid her sylvan combs

## 3

An attempt has been made recently to whitewash both Jeffreys and Kirke. By one of those coincidences so common in everyday life my host had commanded Kirke's regiment, the Queen's, so named after Catharine of Braganza. This

regiment had been quartered in Tangier prior to the Bloody Assize. The field where Kirke encamped is still called Tangier. Probably his "lambs" were no blacker sheep than the rank and file of that day, who obeyed orders under direst penalties for disobedience. One Zoomerzet man, an adherent of Monmouth, ransomed his miserable life by seething in tar what was left of Kirke's victims cut down from the gallows before they were dead! He was known as Tom Boilman. The vengeance of high heaven overtook him. He was struck dead by lightning. In my host's house hung certain engravings portraying incidents of the Indian mutiny. In one, Hodson, of Hodson's Horse, is "featured" shooting with his own hand the sons of the old Mughal emperor, Bahadur Shah. My appetite for dinner was grievously diminished.

Kirke is credited with one act of mercy. Mary Bridges, a girl of eleven years old, stabbed a soldier, after the Battle of Sedgmoor, because the brute assaulted her mother. She was tried by Kirke and honourably acquitted. The sword which was presented to her is to-day to be seen in Wellington, the Somerset town from which the Iron Duke took his title.

Another part of Taunton is labelled "Gibraltar" for much the same reason. The curator showed me an old drawing of the castle (now the museum), with its inner and outer moats. Would that they could have been preserved!

As I was staying in the Canons' House, adjoining St. Mary's Church, where, prior to the dissolution, jolly clerics dispensed the same generous hospitality which my kind host bestowed on me, I settled myself in an easy chair to read a history of the Priory, dullish reading. I shall not

inflict upon my readers what I found of interest, because the compilers of guide books have fished out the plums from the pudding. It is amazing (to me) that the writers of these ancient quartos had no sense of humour—or diligently suppressed it. Chaucer had humour. Was he read by the men who wrote our county histories? Why do these dry-as dust gentlemen exclude from their pages the human touch? There is so much about places, so little about persons apart from the dreary, interminable lists of their names. Anecdotes are disdained by these scribes. There are no side-lights upon character. Not a Boswell amongst the lot!

## 4

*The Somerset Countryman*, published by the Rural Community Council, deserves a larger circulation. I came upon a tidbit in a year-old number. I did not know that Shakespeare had introduced in *King Lear* (Act IV, Scene 6) a character speaking the Somerset dialect. Edgar, son of the Earl of Gloucester, appears in the guise of a peasant and has an altercation with Goneril's steward.

*Steward* Let go his arm.

*Edgar* Chill not let go, zir, without further 'casion.

*Steward* Let go, slave, or thou dy'st.

*Edgar* Good gentleman, go your gait, and let poor volk pass.  
And ch ud ha been zwaggered out of my life, 'twould  
not ha been zo long as 'tis by a vortnight. . .

The contributor goes on to say that some scholars consider that the Swan of Avon was familiar with the Bath

of his day. Bathonians, as yet, do not claim the royal bird as one of our worthies.

In another number of *The Countryman* I found mention of a haunted stone still to be seen by the curious in a field not far from the ruins of a house where Nicholas and Dorothy Wadham lived, the founders of Wadham College, Oxford, a large, reddish-brown boulder which collects the dew trickling into a cavity in its centre, a cavity reputed never to run dry. Woe to anyone who tries to move this stone! Tradition has it that treasure lies beneath it; and that a reckless man, harnessing two horses to the stone, attempted to drag it away. The horses died; the man fell prostrate and never worked again. Repeating this legend to my host's head gardener, he expressed no disbelief in it and told me another concerning that amazing prehistoric monument, the Tarr (or Tor) Steps spanning the River Brawle some five miles from Dulverton. The stones are uncemented; the steps (if the river is not in spate) are three feet above the water; the distance from bank to bank is 180 feet. If one of these boulders is removed, it is replaced by unknown hands during the following night!

Youth scoffs at these old wives' tales, but would a young farmer of to-day dare to move the haunted stone of Ilton?

## 5

Within easy distance of Taunton, near Ilminster, is the village of Shepton Beauchamp, where on Shrove Tuesday a quaint custom was honoured within the past forty years. It may be still honoured. I was surprised to find no

mention of it in either Lean or Hone. A reader of *This Was England*, living in South Africa, wrote as follows

Have you ever been to Shepton Beauchamp on Shrove Tuesday? Egg shackling Day is looked forward to by the children of the village school. Each child brings an egg to school on which is written his or her name. These eggs are placed in a sieve. On a bench two boys sit astride facing each other. Between them is the sieve. They push the sieve to and fro. Whenever an egg cracks it is taken out and handed to the owner. The last three eggs left in the sieve gain prizes. In olden days all the eggs were given to the school master for his sustenance during Lent.

Could the domine make omelettes? My correspondent wrote that he had been present at this egg shackling thirty eight years ago. When I dipped into my Lean, I found recorded an inscription taken from one of the Shepton Beauchamp church bells

Hang me right and ring we well,  
They'll hear me sound at Hambdon Hill

Ham Hill is some five miles from the incomparable Montacute. A well rung bell, if the wind helped to carry its sound, ought to be heard there. The famous stone of which Sherborne Abbey is built comes from Ham Hill. How much of it is left? There is no stone in the kingdom so richly golden, radiating, if rightly laid, the sunsets of a thousand years.

## 6

My host at Taunton, who was at Sandhurst with me in 1881, is an impassioned gardener, never happier than when he is talking about his flowers.

## TAUNTON AND THE QUANTOCKS

The kiss of the sun for pardon,  
The song of the birds for mirth,  
One is nearer God's heart in a garden  
Than anywhere else on earth.

Who wrote these lines which have just bubbled up out of a memory not so good as it was? It is rank ingratitude, so Clarissa says, to cite verses which long ago have tickled our fancy when we have forgotten their authorship.

It was my host (I think) who spoke of flowers as weather prophets:

Pimpernel, pimpernel, tell me true  
Whether the weather be fine or no.  
No heart can think, no tongue can tell  
The virtues of the pimpernel.

In Dorset the pimpernel is called "the Poor Man's Weather-glass," because it closes its delicate petals on the approach of rain. Evelyn commends its use in wine. Does it give a flavour to claret-cup, for instance, as borage does?

A correspondent has sent me a scrap of folk-lore about rosemary. If a sprig be picked and worn by a young married woman, she is inviting the stork to visit her home. If she wears it constantly, she will have a large family. When a young man gives rosemary to a girl, he means her to understand that he hopes she will be the mother of his children. "Rosemary only grows where the missus is master."

According to another correspondent, the burning of fern causes rain. If you gather poppies, you will presently hear thunder.

This, perhaps, is the place to express my gratitude to many persons unknown to me who have taken the trouble to send crumbs from their tables. A young lady writes from Skipton-in-Craven, Yorks:

On New Year's Day we have in this town what are called "Scrambles," meant for the children, but many older people participate. At eleven in the morning children assemble in front of the shops and give a great shout—Yorkshire children can shout—and then the shop-keepers throw out coppers or damaged wares, such as bruised fruit. We have a legend connected with wild geese. The salesmen call them "Gabriel's Hounds," sent by an archangel to hunt for the lost souls who die without being christened. But the wise-acs tell them that the cries of the geese merely portend stormy weather. Still, "they knaws what they knaws," like your old gramfers.

The New Year must not be let in by a woman or a fair man, or ill-luck will befall the household. If you borrow money on New Year's Eve, you will remain in debt for the rest of the year. In one village it is the custom to smack the head of a newly-christened child with a bank-book. Then it will grow up with "saving" in its bonnet. Not long ago some Yorkshire tykes who found the parish church too small for an increasing congregation piled dung about the walls to stimulate growth. . . .

Out of a mass of notes dealing with weather lore, I try to select what amuses me in the hope that it will amuse others. In Somerset the "wold volk" used to believe that a German band wrung tears from the skies. Mr. Udal records that "a candidate in a recent Civil Service examination gave as a reason for the decreasing number of German bands in this country that people will not give them money because they bring rain."

Why did the German bands come to us? Clarissa is of opinion that they played themselves out of their own country where a music-loving public refused to listen to them.

## The Quantocks.

Mr. Edward Hutton, a vagabond after my own heart, in his *Highways and Byways in Somerset*, speaks of approaching these airy ridges either from Bridgwater or Taunton. I have done both. But I would sooner board and lodge in Taunton. Bridgwater, apart from its historical associations, has little alluring about it. On the fifth of November the town holds high carnival. I went over an old house where Jeffreys stayed; I found above the high altar in the fine old church a superb picture of the Descent from the Cross, presented by a godson of Queen Anne. Nobody in Bridgwater knew who painted it. Here too is the cross where Monmouth proclaimed himself King, and a statue to that gallant sailor, Admiral Blake.

The hanging woods upon the southerly slopes of the Quantocks give snug harbourage to the tall red deer. As you follow the ridges, you can see alternately the fair Vale of Taunton and Severn's sea with the Welsh mountains beyond. The villages, for the most part, lie tucked away. Some of the outlying farms must be snow-bound in severe winters. I was astounded to see—as on Dartmoor—so little animal life. Again I must repeat what I was told by an old resident emphatic in his indictment of the hill farmers as men lacking in initiative. The hills would carry, so he affirmed, at least double the number of sheep and cattle now grazing on them. I print this for what it is worth. I had to attend a meeting of the Rural Community Council in Taunton. The councillors know, none better, that the slogan "Back to the Land" is a counsel of perfection



unless the land can support those who do come back to it. Farming is as big a gamble as matrimony. Having made and lost much money in the cattle-business, I happen to know from bitter experience that the right stocking of pasturage is at the mercy of the clerk of the weather. Three years of drought made a bankrupt of me!

These Quantock Hills are lovely. In the not too distant future they will have residential value, as the ugly phrase goes. But a jerry built bungalow would be blown away, if a sou'-wester did its duty. That is why the hamlets are hidden. Clarissa entreats me not to give names which might, so she suggests, attract the baser sort of builder. The right sort may be trusted to deal tenderly with this virginal county of Somerset, if they adventure hither, and the adventure will be, I repeat for the last time, the more thrilling if they seek out without guidance from others what will become increasingly dear to them as authentic treasure-trove.

My host and I lost our way in the Quantocks, wriggling along grass grown tracks. I am so glad we did. The guide-books sing the praises of Cothelstone, Crowcombe, Halsway, Bicknoller and many other villages more or less on the highways, but the bypaths, which Mr. Hutton speaks of as "paths in paradise," would give to the wayfarer enchanting walks for every day of a month's holiday.

Carry your own nosebag!

As soon as I got back to my own home I reread *The Ancient Mariner*, expecting to find in it a line or two that might indicate where the poem was composed. Disappointment awaited me, but Clarissa, next day, suggested that "below the hill, below the kirk, below the lighthouse top" might have been written after a visit to Watchet. I found, by

another coincidence, my beautiful Aldine edition in three volumes cheek by jowl with a similar edition of Wordsworth. Idly, I glanced at the fly-leaf of the Coleridge. On it was inscribed:

Charles Brodrick Scott.  
Eton, July 30th, 1843.  
From his sincere friend,  
Edward Coleridge.

Edward was a nephew of the poet and a Fellow of Exeter College in 1823. How did this edition come into my grandfather's possession? I wish I knew. But this is part of the fascination of old books and old places: you come unexpectedly upon inscriptions which whet curiosity and imagination. I found a pencilled note, in my grandfather's scholarly handwriting—"impossible!"—on the wide margin of the lines:

The horned Moon, with one bright star  
Within the nether tip.

I must ask some student of the stars if Coleridge blundered.

This friendship between these two poets has puzzled commentators on their lives as difficult to explain.

The ancient tag: "We choose our friends but love imposes itself," is less stupid than many of our saws. Why we choose our friends, or why they choose us, gives others food for talk. My daughter has written out some lines, and, like her father, has forgotten who wrote them. With due apologies to the author, I shall set them down, because they express what the ordinary man or woman feels:

## MY VAGABONDAGE

Just to be a friend of yours,  
And to know you re one of mine,  
With a friendship that endures  
And grows sweeter like old wine.  
Just to clasp you by the hand  
In a friendly sort of way,  
And to know you understand  
*All the things I want to say*

Just to feel that you re the sum  
Of things in life worth while.  
Fame and riches go and come  
Life s a tear and now a smile.  
But—when all is said and done  
And we cast up *at the end*,  
Of Life s glories there is one  
Never dimming—that s a friend.

## 7

Go to Watchet—where, when the tide ebbed, a ship was captured by a troop of horse during the Civil War—to visit St Decuman s church and holy well. A Dane cut off the Saint s head. The Saint, like St. Justinian, picked up his head, washed it, and walked away with it. On the West Front of Wells Cathedral, you can see St Decuman with his head under his arm.

In St Decuman's Church a lady, Florence Wyndham, was buried alive. The sexton opened her coffin to steal her rings, and was about to cut off her fingers when the corpse came to life and subsequently gave birth to a son!

One wonders why Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Southey left this loveliest part of England. Mr Hugh

Walpole could give good reasons, no doubt, but even such a lover of the fells as he would have to admit that the climate of Cumberland is depressing. Coleridge wanted to emigrate with Southey to Pennsylvania to found a Pantisocracy on the banks of the Susquehanna! A "pantisocracy" is a community in which all the members are equal in rank and position. Had he been alive at the time, they might have invited Mr. George Bernard Shaw to join them. It is not generally known that Southey generously supported the family of Coleridge. I have delved into the four fat volumes of the *Commonplace Book*, disappointed once more to find so little about the Quantocks.

If these hills surpass description of them, the wayfarer will explore the Brendons and the Doone country. He can stay at Dunster or Dulverton.

After many months of vagabondage, in spring, summer, and the sweet fall of the year, I must seek the harbourage of my own home for the approaching winter:

Here Bath, with guardian hills surrounded,  
Lies lovely as a sleeping queen;  
Wells, with its ring of towers bounded  
And Taunton mid its verdant Deane.  
And there, where Saxon monks made merry  
And Dunstan twisted Satan's tail,  
The ruined walls of Glastonbury  
Rise from the fruitful Polden vale.  
Town after town, like jewels set  
In the fair crown of Somerset.

Fair winds! Free way! For Youth the Rover;  
We all must share the Curse of Cain;  
But bring me back when youth is over  
To "the wold crooked shire" again.

## MY VAGABONDAGE

Aye, bring me back in life's declining  
To the one home that's home for me,  
Where in the west the sunset shuning  
Goes down into the Severn sea,  
And let my dying eyes be set  
On the dear hills of Somerset.

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